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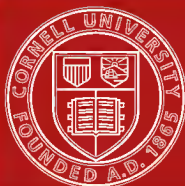
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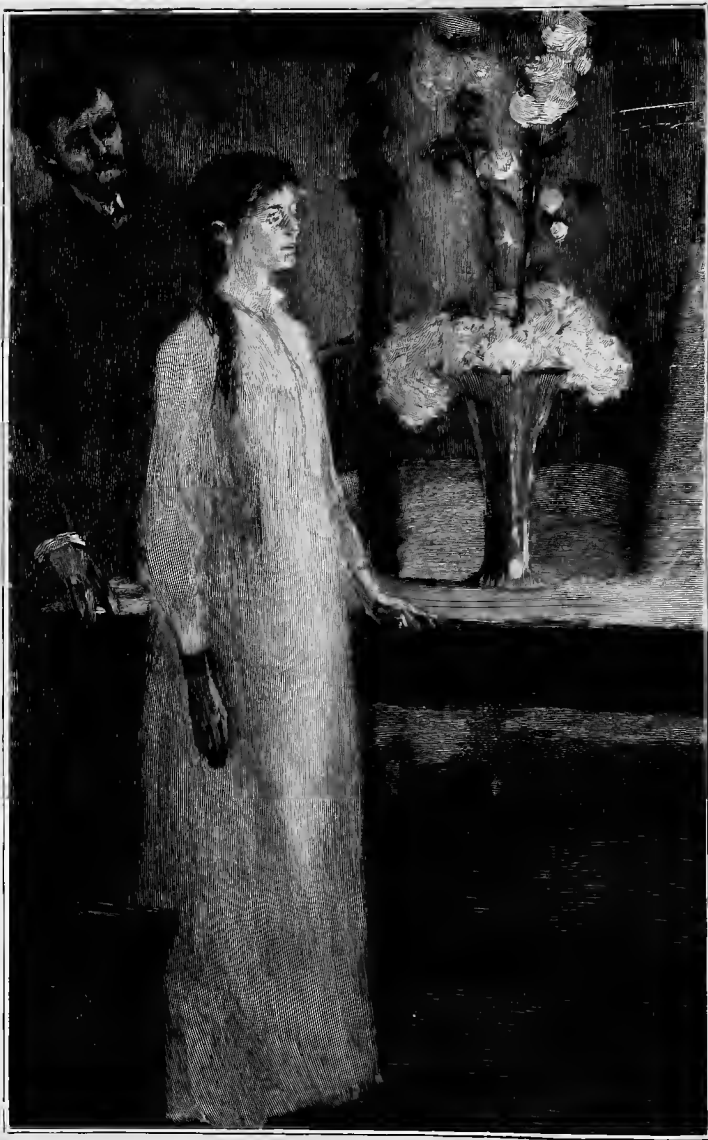


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She continued to look round the room.

THE DREAM

(LE RÊVE)

BY

ÉMILE ZOLA

AUTHOR OF 'THE DOWNFALL' 'DR PASCAL' ETC.

TRANSLATED BY ELIZA E. CHASE



A NEW EDITION

WITH 8 ILLUSTRATIONS BY GEORGES JEANNIOT

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THE DREAM

CHAPTER I

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DURING the severe winter of 1860 the river Oise was frozen over and the plains of Lower Picardy were covered with deep snow. On Christmas Day, especially, a heavy squall from the north-east had almost buried the little city of Beaumont. The snow, which began to fall early in the morning, increased towards evening and accumulated during the night; in the upper town, in the Rue des Orfèvres, at the end of which, as if enclosed therein, is the northern front of the cathedral transept, this was blown with great force by the wind against the portal of Saint Agnes, the old Romanesque portal, where traces of Early Gothic could be seen, contrasting its florid ornamentation with the bare simplicity of the transept gable.

The inhabitants still slept, wearied by the festive rejoicings of the previous day. The town-clock struck six. In the darkness, which was slightly lightened by the slow, persistent fall of the flakes, a vague living form alone was visible: that of a little girl, nine years of age, who, having taken refuge under the archway of the portal, had passed the night there, shivering, and sheltering herself as well as possible. She wore a thin

woollen dress, ragged from long use, her head was covered with a torn silk handkerchief, and on her bare feet were heavy shoes much too large for her. Without doubt she had only gone there after having well wandered through the town, for she had fallen down from sheer exhaustion. For her it was the end of the world; there was no longer anything to interest her. It was the last surrender; the hunger that gnaws, the cold which kills; and in her weakness, stifled by the heavy weight at her heart, she ceased to struggle, and nothing was left to her but the instinctive movement of preservation, the desire of changing place, of sinking still deeper into these old stones, whenever a sudden gust made the snow whirl about her.

Hour after hour passed. For a long time, between the divisions of this double door, she leaned her back against the abutting pier, on whose column was a statue of Saint Agnes, the martyr of but thirteen years of age, a little girl like herself, who carried a branch of palm, and at whose feet was a lamb. And in the tympanum, above the lintel, the whole legend of the Virgin Child betrothed to Jesus could be seen in high relief, set forth with a charming simplicity of faith. Her hair, which grew long and covered her like a garment when the Governor, whose son she had refused to marry, gave her up to the soldiers; the flames of the funeral pile, destined to destroy her, turning aside and burning her executioners as soon as they lighted the wood; the miracles performed by her relics; Constance, daughter of the Emperor, cured of leprosy; and the quaint story of one of her painted images, which, when the priest Paulinus offered it a very valuable emerald ring, held out its finger, then withdrew it, keeping the ring, which

can be seen at this present day. At the top of the tympanum, in a halo of glory, Agnes is at last received into heaven, where her betrothed, Jesus, marries her, so young and so little, giving her the kiss of eternal happiness.

But when the wind rushed through the street, the snow was blown in the child's face, and the threshold was almost barred by the white masses; then she moved away to the side, against the virgins placed above the base of the arch. These are the companions of Agnes, the saints who served as her escort: three at her right—Dorothea, who was fed in prison by miraculous bread; Barbe, who lived in a tower; and Genevieve, whose heroism saved Paris: and three at her left—Agatha, whose breast was torn; Christina, who was put to torture by her father; and Cecilia, beloved by the angels. Above these were statues and statues; three close ranks mounting with the curves of the arches, decorating them with chaste triumphant figures, who, after the suffering and martyrdom of their earthly life, were welcomed by a host of winged cherubim, transported with ecstasy into the Celestial Kingdom.

There had been no shelter for the little waif for a long time, when at last the clock struck eight and daylight came. The snow, had she not trampled it down, would have come to her shoulders. The old door behind her was covered with it, as if hung with ermine, and it looked as white as an altar, beneath the grey front of the church, so bare and smooth that not even a single flake had clung to it. The great saints, those of the sloping surface especially, were clothed in it, and were glistening in purity from their feet to their white beards. Still higher, in the scenes of the tympanum, the outlines of

the little saints of the arches were designed most clearly on a dark background, and this magic effect continued until the final rapture at the marriage of Agnes, which the archangels appeared to be celebrating under a shower of white roses. Standing upon her pillar, with her white branch of palm and her white lamb, the Virgin Child had such purity in the lines of her body of immaculate snow, that the motionless stiffness of cold seemed to congeal around her the mystic transports of victorious youth. And at her feet the other child, so miserable, white with snow—she also grew so stiff and pale that it seemed as if she were turning to stone, and could scarcely be distinguished from the great images above her.

At last, in one of the long line of houses in which all seemed to be sleeping, the noise from the drawing up of a blind made her raise her eyes. It was at her right hand, in the second story of a house at the side of the Cathedral. A very handsome woman, a brunette about forty years of age, with a placid expression of serenity, was just looking out from there, and in spite of the terrible frost she kept her uncovered arm in the air for a moment, having seen the child move. Her calm face grew sad with pity and astonishment. Then, shivering, she hastily closed the window. She carried with her the rapid vision of a fair little creature with violet-coloured eyes under an head-covering of an old silk handkerchief. The face was oval, the neck long and slender as a lily, and the shoulders drooping; but she was blue from cold, her little hands and feet were half dead, and the only thing about her that still showed life was the slight vapour of her breath.

The child remained with her eyes upturned, looking at the house mechanically. It was a narrow one, two

stories in height, very old, and evidently built towards the end of the fifteenth century. It was almost sealed to the side of the Cathedral, between two buttresses, like a wart which had pushed itself between the two toes of a Colossus. And thus supported on each side, it was admirably preserved, with its stone basement, its second story in wooden panels, ornamented with bricks, its roof, of which the framework advanced at least three feet beyond the gable, its turret for the projecting stairway at the left corner, where could still be seen in the little window the leaden setting of long ago. At times repairs had been made on account of its age. The tile-roofing dated from the reign of Louis XIV., for one easily recognised the work of that epoch ; a dormer window pierced in the side of the turret, little wooden frames replacing everywhere those of the primitive panes ; the three united openings of the second story had been reduced to two, that of the middle being closed up with bricks, thus giving to the front the symmetry of the other buildings on the street of a more recent date.

In the basement the changes were equally visible, an oaken door with mouldings having taken the place of the old one with iron trimmings that was under the stairway ; and the great central arcade, of which the lower part, the sides, and the point had been plastered over, so as to leave only one rectangular opening, was now a species of large window, instead of the triple-pointed one which formerly came out on to the street.

Without thinking, the child still looked at this venerable dwelling of a master-builder, so well preserved, and as she read upon a little yellow plate nailed at the left of the door these words, 'Hubert, chasuble maker,' printed in black letters, she was again attracted by the

sound of the opening of a shutter. This time it was the blind of the square window of the ground-floor. A man in his turn looked out; his face was full, his nose aquiline, his forehead projecting, and his thick short hair already white, although he was scarcely yet five-and-forty. He, too, forgot the air for a moment as he examined her with a sad wrinkle on his great tender mouth. Then she saw him, as he remained standing behind the little greenish-looking panes. He turned, beckoned to someone, and his wife reappeared. How handsome she was! They both stood side by side, looking at her earnestly and sadly.

For four hundred years, the line of Huberts, embroiderers from father to son, had lived in this house. A noted maker of chasubles had built it under Louis XI., another had repaired it under Louis XIV., and the Hubert who now occupied it still embroidered church vestments, as his ancestors had always done. At twenty years of age he had fallen in love with a young girl of sixteen, Hubertine, and so deep was their affection for each other, that when her mother, widow of a magistrate, refused to give her consent to their union, they ran away together and were married. She was remarkably beautiful, and that was their whole romance, their joy, and their misfortune.

When, a year later, she went to the deathbed of her mother, the latter disinherited her and gave her her curse. So affected was she by the terrible scene, that her infant, born soon after, died, and since then it seemed as if, even in her coffin in the cemetery, the wilful woman had never pardoned her daughter, for it was, alas! a childless household. After twenty-four years they still mourned the little one they had lost.

Disturbed by their looks, the stranger tried to hide herself behind the pillar of Saint Agnes. She was also annoyed by the movement which now commenced in the street, as the shops were being opened and people began to go out. The Rue des Orfèvres, which terminates at the side front of the church, would be almost impassable, blocked in as it is on one side by the house of the Huberts, if the Rue du Soleil, a narrow lane, did not relieve it on the other side by running the whole length of the Cathedral to the great front on the Place du Cloître. At this hour there were few passers, excepting one or two persons who were on their way to early service, and they looked with surprise at the poor little girl, whom they did not recognise as ever having seen at Beaumont. The slow, persistent fall of snow continued. The cold seemed to increase with the wan daylight, and in the dull thickness of the great white shroud which covered the town one heard, as if from a distance, the sound of voices. But timid, ashamed of her abandonment, as if it were a fault, the child drew still farther back, when suddenly she recognised before her Hubertine, who, having no servant, had gone out to buy bread.

‘What are you doing there, little one? Who are you?’

She did not answer, but hid her face. Then she was no longer conscious of suffering; her whole being seemed to have faded away, as if her heart, turned to ice, had stopped beating. When the good lady turned away with a pitying look, she sank down upon her knees completely exhausted, and slipped listlessly into the snow, whose flakes quickly covered her.

And the woman, as she returned with her fresh

rolls, seeing that she had fallen, again approached her.

‘Look up, my child! You cannot remain here on this doorstep.’

Then Hubert, who had also come out, and was standing near the threshold, took the bread from his wife, and said :

‘Take her up and bring her into the house.’

Hubertine did not reply, but, stooping, lifted her in her strong arms. And the child shrank back no longer, but was carried as if inanimate ; her teeth closely set, her eyes shut, chilled through and through, and with the lightness of a little bird that has just fallen from its nest.

They went in. Hubert shut the door, while Hubertine, bearing her burden, passed through the front room, which served as a parlour, and where some embroidered bands were spread out for show before the great square window. Then she went into the kitchen, the old servants’ hall, preserved almost intact, with its heavy beams, its flagstone floor mended in a dozen places, and its great fireplace with its stone mantelpiece. On shelves were the utensils, the pots, kettles, and saucepans, that dated back one or two centuries ; and the dishes were of old stone, or earthenware, and of pewter. But on the middle of the hearth was a modern cooking-stove, a large cast-iron one, whose copper trimmings were wondrously bright. It was red from heat, and the water was bubbling away in its boiler. A large porringer, filled with coffee-and-milk, was on one corner of it.

‘Oh! how much more comfortable it is here than outside,’ said Hubert, as he put the bread down on a heavy table of the style of Louis XIII., which was in

the centre of the room. 'Now, seat this poor little creature near the stove that she may be thawed out!'

Hubertine had already placed the child close to the fire, and they both looked at her as she slowly regained consciousness. As the snow that covered her clothes melted it fell in heavy drops. Through the holes of her great shoes they could see her little bruised feet, whilst the thin woollen dress designed the rigidity of her limbs and her poor body, worn by misery and pain. She had a long attack of nervous trembling, and then opened her frightened eyes with the start of an animal which suddenly awakes from sleep to find itself caught in a snare. Her face seemed to sink away under the silken rag which was tied under her chin. Her right arm appeared to be helpless, for she pressed it so closely to her breast.

'Do not be alarmed, for we will not hurt you. Where did you come from? Who are you?'

But the more she was spoken to the more frightened she became, turning her head as if someone were behind her who would beat her. She examined the kitchen furtively, the flaggings, the beams, and the shining utensils; then her glance passed through the irregular windows which were left in the ancient opening, and she saw the garden clear to the trees by the Bishop's house, whose white shadows towered above the wall at the end, while at the left, as if astonished at finding itself there, stretched along the whole length of the alley the Cathedral, with its Romanesque windows in the chapels of its apses. And again, from the heat of the stove which began to penetrate her, she had a long attack of shivering, after which she turned her eyes to the floor and remained quiet.

‘Do you belong to Beaumont? Who is your father?’

She was so entirely silent that Hubert thought her throat must be too dry to allow her to speak.

Instead of questioning her he said: ‘We would do much better to give her a good cup of coffee as hot as she can drink it.’

That was so reasonable that Hubertine immediately handed her the cup she herself held. Whilst she cut two large slices of bread and buttered them, the child, still mistrustful, continued to shrink back; but her hunger was too great, and soon she ate and drank ravenously. That there need not be a restraint upon her, the husband and wife were silent, and were touched to tears on seeing her little hand tremble to such a degree that at times it was difficult for her to reach her mouth. She made use only of her left hand, for her right arm seemed to be fastened to her chest. When she had finished, she almost broke the cup, which she caught again by an awkward movement of her elbow.

‘Have you hurt your arm badly?’ Hubertine asked. ‘Do not be afraid, my dear, but show it to me.’

But as she was about to touch it the child rose up hastily, trying to prevent her, and as in the struggle she moved her arm, a little pasteboard-covered book, which she had hidden under her dress, slipped through a large tear in her waist. She tried to take it, and when she saw her unknown hosts open and begin to read it, she clenched her fist in anger.

It was an official certificate, given by the Administration des Enfants Assistés in the Department of the Seine. On the first page, under a medallion containing

a likeness of Saint Vincent de Paul, were the printed prescribed forms. For the family name, a simple black line filled the allotted space. Then for the Christian names were those of Angelique Marie; for the dates, born January 22, 1851, admitted the 23rd of the same month under the registered number of 1,634. So there was neither father nor mother; there were no papers; not even a statement of where she was born; nothing but this little book of official coldness, with its cover of pale red pasteboard. No relative in the world! and even her abandonment numbered and classed!

'Oh! then she is a foundling!' exclaimed Hubertine.

In a paroxysm of rage the child replied: 'I am much better than all the others—yes—yes! I am better, better, better. I have never taken anything that did not belong to me, and yet they stole all I had. Give me back, now, that which you also have stolen from me!'

Such powerless passion, such pride to be above the others in goodness, so shook the body of the little girl, that the Huberts were startled. They no longer recognised the blonde creature, with violet eyes and graceful figure. Now her eyes were black, her face dark, and her neck seemed swollen by a rush of blood to it. Since she had become warm, she raised her head and hissed like a serpent that had been picked up on the snow.

'Are you then really so naughty?' asked Hubert gently. 'If we wish to know all about you, it is because we wish to help you.'

And looking over the shoulders of his wife he read as the latter turned the leaves of the little book. On the second page was the name of the nurse. 'The child,

Angelique Marie, had been given, on January 25, 1851, to the nurse, Françoise, sister of Mr. Hamelin, a farmer by profession, living in the parish of Soulanges, an arrondissement of Nevers. The aforesaid nurse had received on her departure the pay for the first month of her care, in addition to her clothing.' Then there was a certificate of her baptism, signed by the chaplain of the Asylum for Abandoned Children; also that of the physician on the arrival and on the departure of the infant. The monthly accounts, paid in quarterly instalments, filled farther on the columns of four pages, and each time there was the illegible signature of the receiver or collector.

'What! Nevers!' asked Hubertine. 'You were brought up near Nevers?'

Angelique, red with anger that she could not prevent them from reading, had fallen into a sullen silence. But at last she opened her mouth to speak of her nurse.

'Ah! you may be sure that Maman Nini would have beaten you. She always took my part against others, she did, although sometimes she struck me herself. Ah! it is true I was not so unhappy over there, with the cattle and all!'

Her voice choked her and she continued, in broken, incoherent sentences, to speak of the meadow where she drove the great red cow, of the broad road where she played, of the cakes they cooked, and of a pet house-dog that had once bitten her.

Hubert interrupted her as he read aloud: 'In case of illness, or of bad treatment, the superintendent is authorised to change the nurses of the children.' Below it was written that the child Angelique Marie had been given on June 20 to the care of Theresa, wife of Louis

Franchomme, both of them makers of artificial flowers in Paris.

‘Ah! I understand,’ said Hubertine. ‘You were ill, and so they took you back to Paris.’

But no, that was not the case, and the Huberts did not know the whole history until they had drawn it, little by little, from Angelique. Louis Franchomme, who was a cousin of Maman Nini, went to pass a month in his native village when recovering from a fever. It was then that his wife, Theresa, became very fond of the child, and obtained permission to take her to Paris, where she could be taught the trade of making flowers. Three months later her husband died, and she herself, being delicate in health, was obliged to leave the city and to go to her brother’s, the tanner Rabier, who was settled at Beaumont. She, alas! died in the early days of December, and confided to her sister-in-law the little girl, who since that time had been injured, beaten, and, in short, suffered martyrdom.

‘The Rabiers?’ said Hubert. ‘The Rabiers? Yes, yes! They are tanners on the banks of the Ligneul, in the lower town. The husband is lame, and the wife is a noted scold.’

‘They treated me as if I came from the gutter,’ continued Angelique, revolted and enraged in her mortified pride. ‘They said the river was the best place for me. After she had beaten me nearly to death, the woman would put something on the floor for me to eat, as if I were a cat, and many a time I went to bed suffering from hunger. Oh! I could have killed myself at last!’ She made a gesture of furious despair.

‘Yesterday, Christmas morning, they had been drinking, and, to amuse themselves, they threatened to

put out my eyes. Then, after a while, they began to fight with each other, and dealt such heavy blows that I thought they were dead, as they both fell on the floor of their room. For a long time I had determined to run away. But I was anxious to have my book. Maman Nini had often said, in showing it to me: "Look, this is all that you own, and if you do not keep this you will not even have a name." And I know that since the death of Maman Theresa they had hid it in one of the bureau drawers. So stepping over them as quietly as possible, while they were lying on the floor, I got the book, hid it under my dress-waist, pressing it against me with my arm. It seemed so large that I fancied everyone must see it, and that it would be taken from me. Oh! I ran, and ran, and ran, and when night came it was so dark! Oh! how cold I was under the poor shelter of that great door! Oh dear! I was so cold, it seemed as if I were dead. But never mind now, for I did not once let go of my book, and here it is.' And with a sudden movement, as the Huberts closed it to give it back to her, she snatched it from them. Then, sitting down, she put her head on the table, sobbing deeply as she laid her cheek on the light red cover. Her pride seemed conquered by an intense humility. Her whole being appeared to be softened by the sight of these few leaves with their rumpled corners—her solitary possession, her one treasure, and the only tie which connected her with the life of this world. She could not relieve her heart of her great despair; her tears flowed continually, and under this complete surrender of herself she regained her delicate looks and became again a pretty child. Her slightly oval face was pure in its outlines, her violet eyes were made a little

paler from emotion, and the curve of her neck and shoulders made her resemble a little virgin on a church window. At length she seized the hand of Hubertine, pressed it to her lips most caressingly, and kissed it passionately.

The Huberts were deeply touched, and could scarcely speak. They stammered: 'Dear, dear child!'

She was not, then, in reality bad! Perhaps with affectionate care she could be corrected of this violence of temper which had so alarmed them.

In a tone of entreaty the poor child exclaimed: 'Do not send me back to those dreadful people! Oh, do not send me back again!'

The husband and wife looked at each other for a few moments. In fact, since the autumn they had planned taking as an apprentice some young girl who would live with them, and thus bring a little brightness into their house, which seemed so dull without children. And their decision was soon made.

'Would you like it, my dear?' Hubert asked.

Hubertine replied quietly, in her calm voice: 'I would indeed.'

Immediately they occupied themselves with the necessary formalities. The husband went to the Justice of Peace of the northern district of Beaumont, who was cousin to his wife, the only relative with whom she had kept up an acquaintance, and told him all the facts of the case. He took charge of it, wrote to the Hospice of Abandoned Children—where, thanks to the registered number, Angelique was easily recognised—and obtained permission for her to remain as apprentice with the Huberts, who were well known for their honourable position.

The Sub-Inspector of the Hospice, on coming to verify the little book, signed the new contract as witness for Hubert, by which the latter promised to treat the child kindly, to keep her tidy, to send her to school and to church, and to give her a good bed to herself. On the other side, the Administration agreed to pay him all indemnities, and to give the child certain stipulated articles of clothing, as was their custom.

In ten days all was arranged. Angelique slept upstairs in a room under the roof, by the side of the garret, and the window of which overlooked the garden. She had already taken her first lessons in embroidery. The first Sunday morning after she was in her new home, before going to mass, Hubertine opened before her the old chest in the working-room, where she kept the fine gold thread. She held up the little book, then, placing it in the back part of one of the drawers, said: 'Look! I have put it here. I will not hide it, but leave it where you can take it if you ever wish to do so. It is best that you should see it, and remember where it is.'

On entering the church that day, Angelique found herself again under the doorway of Saint Agnes. During the week there had been a partial thaw, then the cold weather had returned to so intense a degree that the snow which had half melted on the statues had congealed itself in large bunches or in icicles. Now, the figures seemed dressed in transparent robes of ice, with lace trimmings like spun glass. Dorothea was holding a torch, the liquid droppings of which fell upon her hands. Cecilia wore a silver crown, in which glistened the most brilliant of pearls. Agatha's nude chest was protected by a crystal armour. And the scenes in the

tympanum, the little virgins in the arches, looked as if they had been there for centuries, behind the glass and jewels of the shrine of a saint. Agnes herself let trail behind her her court mantle, threaded with light and embroidered with stars. Her lamb had a fleece of diamonds, and her palm-branch had become the colour of heaven. The whole door was resplendent in the purity of intense cold.

Angelique recollected the night she had passed there under the protection of these saints. She raised her head and smiled upon them.

CHAPTER II

BEAUMONT is composed of two villages, completely separated and quite distinct one from the other—Beaumont-l'Église, on the hill, with its old Cathedral of the twelfth century, its Bishop's Palace which dates only from the seventeenth century, its inhabitants, scarcely one thousand in number, who are crowded together in an almost stifling way in its narrow streets; and Beaumont-la-Ville, at the foot of the hill, on the banks of the Ligneul, an ancient suburb, which the success of its manufactories of lace and of fine cambric has enriched and enlarged to such an extent that it has a population of nearly ten thousand persons, several public squares, and an elegant sub-prefecture built in the modern style. These two divisions, the northern district and the southern district, have thus no longer anything in common except in an administrative way. Although scarcely thirty leagues from Paris, where one can go by rail in two hours, Beaumont-l'Église seems to be still immured in its old ramparts, of which, however, only three gates remain. A stationary, peculiar class of people lead there a life similar to that which their ancestors had led from father to son during the past five hundred years.

The Cathedral explains everything, has given birth

to and preserved everything. It is the mother, the queen, as it rises in all its majesty in the centre of, and above, the little collection of low houses, which, like shivering birds, are sheltered under her wings of stone. One lives there simply for it, and only by it. There is no movement of business activity, and the little tradesmen only sell the necessities of life, such as are absolutely required to feed, to clothe, and to maintain the church and its clergy; and if occasionally one meets some private individuals, they are merely the last representatives of a scattered crowd of worshippers. The church dominates all; each street is one of its veins; the town has no other breath than its own. On that account, this spirit of another age, this religious torpor from the past, makes the cloistered city which surrounds it redolent with a savoury perfume of peace and of faith.

And in all this mystic place, the house of the Huberts, where Angelique was to live in the future, was the one nearest to the Cathedral, and which clung to it as if in reality it were a part thereof. The permission to build there, between two of the great buttresses, must have been given by some vicar long ago, who was desirous of attaching to himself the ancestors of this line of embroiderers, as master chasuble-makers and furnishers for the Cathedral clergy. On the southern side, the narrow garden was barred by the colossal building; first, the circumference of the side chapels, whose windows overlooked the flower-beds, and then the slender, long nave, that the flying buttresses supported, and afterwards the high roof covered with sheet lead.

The sun never penetrated to the lower part of this

garden, where ivy and box alone grew luxuriantly ; yet the eternal shadow there was very soft and pleasant as it fell from the gigantic brow of the apse—a religious shadow, sepulchral and pure, which had a good odour about it. In the greenish half-light of its calm freshness, the two towers let fall only the sound of their chimes. But the entire house kept the quivering therefrom, sealed as it was to these old stones, melted into them and supported by them. It trembled at the least of the ceremonies ; at the High Mass, the rumbling of the organ, the voices of the choristers, even the oppressed sighs of the worshippers, murmured through each one of its rooms, lulled it as if with a holy breath from the Invisible, and at times through the half-cool walls seemed to come the vapours from the burning incense.

For five years Angelique lived and grew there, as if in a cloister, far away from the world. She only went out to attend the seven-o'clock Mass on Sunday mornings, as Hubertine had obtained permission for her to study at home, fearing that, if sent to school, she might not always have the best of associates. This old dwelling, so shut in, with its garden of a dead quiet, was her world. She occupied as her chamber a little whitewashed room under the roof ; she went down in the morning to her breakfast in the kitchen, she went up again to the working-room in the second story to her embroidery. And these places, with the turning stone stairway of the turret, were the only corners in which she passed her time ; for she never went into the Huberts' apartments, and only crossed the parlour on the first floor, and they were the two rooms which had been rejuvenated and modernised. In the parlour, the beams were plastered over, and the ceiling had been decorated with a palm-

leaf cornice, accompanied by a rose centre ; the wall-paper dated from the First Empire, as well as the white marble chimney-piece and the mahogany furniture, which consisted of a sofa and four armchairs covered with Utrecht velvet, a centre table, and a cabinet.

On the rare occasions when she went there, to add to the articles exposed for sale some new bands of embroidery, if she cast her eyes without, she saw through the window the same unchanging vista, the narrow street ending at the portal of Saint Agnes ; a parishioner pushing open the little lower door, which shut itself without any noise, and the shops of the plate-worker and wax-candle-maker opposite, which appeared to be always empty, but where was a good display of holy sacramental vessels, and long lines of great church tapers. And the cloistral calm of all Beaumont-l'Église—of the Rue Magloire, back of the Bishop's Palace, of the Grande Rue, where the Rue des Orfèvres began, and of the Place du Cloître, where rose up the two towers, was felt in the drowsy air, and seemed to fall gently with the pale daylight on the deserted pavement.

Hubertine had taken upon herself the charge of the education of Angelique. Moreover, she was very old-fashioned in her ideas, and maintained that a woman knew enough if she could read well, write correctly, and had studied thoroughly the first four rules of arithmetic. But even for this limited instruction she had constantly to contend with an unwillingness on the part of her pupil, who, instead of giving her attention to her books, preferred looking out of the windows, although the recreation was very limited, as she could see nothing but the garden from them. In reality, Angelique cared only for reading ; notwithstanding in her dictations,

chosen from some classic writer, she never succeeded in spelling a page correctly, yet her handwriting was exceedingly pretty, graceful, and bold, one of those irregular styles which were quite the fashion long ago. As for other studies, of geography and history and cyphering, she was almost completely ignorant of them. What good would knowledge ever do her? It was really useless, she thought. Later on, when it was time for her to be Confirmed, she learned her Catechism word for word, and with so fervent an ardour that she astonished everyone by the exactitude of her memory.

Notwithstanding their gentleness, during the first year the Huberts were often discouraged. Angelique, who promised to be skilful in embroidering, disconcerted them by sudden changes to inexplicable idleness after days of praiseworthy application. She was capricious, seemed to lose her strength, became greedy, would steal sugar to eat when alone, and her cheeks were flushed and her eyes looked wearied under their reddened lids. If reproved, she would reply with a flood of injurious words. Some days, when they wished to try to subdue her, her foolish pride at being interfered with would throw her into such serious attacks that she would strike her feet and her hands together, and seemed ready to tear her clothing, or to bite anyone who approached her. At such moments they drew away from her, for she was like a little monster ruled by the evil spirit within her.

Who could she be? Where did she come from? Almost always these abandoned children are the offspring of vice. Twice they had resolved to give her up and send her back to the Asylum, so discouraged were they and so deeply did they regret having taken her. But



Menial labour was imposed upon her.

each time these frightful scenes, which almost made the house tremble, ended in the same deluge of tears, and the same excited expressions and acts of penitence, when the child would throw herself on the floor, begging them so earnestly to punish her, that they were obliged to forgive her.

Little by little, Hubertine gained great authority over her. She was peculiarly adapted for such a task, with her kind heart, her gentle firmness, her common-sense and her uniform temper. She taught her the duty of obedience, and the sin of pride and of passion. To obey was to live. We must obey God, our parents, and our superiors. There was a whole hierarchy of respect, outside of which existence was unrestrained and disorderly. So, after each fit of passion, that she might learn humility, some menial labour was imposed upon her as a penance, such as washing the cooking-utensils, or wiping up the kitchen floor ; and, until it was finished, she would remain stooping over her work, enraged at first, but conquered at last.

With the little girl excess seemed to be a marked characteristic in everything, even in her caresses. Many times Hubertine had seen her kissing her hands with vehemence. She would often be in a fever of ecstasy before the little pictures of saints and of the Child Jesus, which she had collected ; and one evening she was found in a half-fainting state, with her head upon the table, and her lips pressed to those of the images. When Hubertine confiscated them there was a terrible scene of tears and cries, as if she herself were being tortured. After that she was held very strictly, was made to obey, and her freaks were at once checked by keeping her busy at her work ; as soon as her cheeks grew very red,

her eyes dark, and she had nervous tremblings, everything was immediately made quiet about her.

Moreover, Hubertine had found an unexpected aid in the book given by the Society for the Protection of Abandoned Children. Every three months, when the collector signed it, Angelique was very low-spirited for the rest of the day. If by chance she saw it when she went to the drawer for a ball of gold thread, her heart seemed pierced with agony. And one day, when in a fit of uncontrollable fury, which nothing had been able to conquer, she turned over the contents of the drawer, she suddenly appeared as if thunderstruck before the red-covered book. Her sobs stifled her. She threw herself at the feet of the Huberts in great humility, stammering that they had made a mistake at giving her shelter, and that she was not worthy of all their kindness. From that time her anger was frequently restrained by the sight or the mention of the book.

In this way Angelique lived until she was twelve years of age and ready to be Confirmed. The calm life of the household, the little old-fashioned building sleeping under the shadow of the Cathedral, perfumed with incense, and penetrated with religious music, favoured the slow amelioration of this untutored nature, this wild flower, taken from no one knew where, and transplanted in the mystic soil of the narrow garden. Added to this was the regularity of her daily work and the utter ignorance of what was going on in the world, without even an echo from a sleepy quarter penetrating therein.

But, above all, the gentlest influence came from the great love of the Huberts for each other, which seemed to be enlarged by some unknown, incurable remorse. He passed the days in endeavouring to make his wife

forget the injury he had done her in marrying her in spite of the opposition of her mother. He had realised at the death of their child that she half accused him of this punishment, and he wished to be forgiven. She had done so years ago, and now she idolised him. Sometimes he was not sure of it, and this doubt saddened his life. He wished they might have had another infant, and so feel assured that the obstinate mother had been softened after death, and had withdrawn her malediction. That, in fact, was their united desire—a child of pardon; and he worshipped his wife with a tender love, ardent and pure as that of a betrothed. If before the apprentice he did not even kiss her hand, he never entered their chamber, even after twenty years of marriage, without an emotion of gratitude for all the happiness that had been given him. This was their true home, this room with its tinted paintings, its blue wall-paper, its pretty hangings, and its walnut furniture. Never was an angry word uttered therein, and, as if from a sanctuary, a sentiment of tenderness went out from its occupants, and filled the house. It was thus for Angelique an atmosphere of affection and love, in which she grew and thrived.

An unexpected event finished the work of forming her character. As she was rummaging one morning in a corner of the working-room, she found on a shelf, among implements of embroidery which were no longer used, a very old copy of the ‘Golden Legend,’ by Jacques de Voragine. This French translation, dating from 1549, must have been bought in the long ago by some master-workman in church vestments, on account of the pictures, full of useful information upon the Saints. It was a great while since Angelique had given any

attention to the little old carved images, showing such childlike faith, which had once delighted her. But now, as soon as she was allowed to go out and play in the garden, she took the book with her. It had been rebound in yellow calf, and was in a good condition. She slowly turned over some of the leaves, then looked at the title-page, in red and black, with the address of the bookseller: 'à Paris, en la rue Neufre Nostre-Dame, â l'enseigne Saint Jehan Baptiste;' and decorated with medallions of the four Evangelists, framed at the bottom by the Adoration of the Three Magi, and at the top by the Triumph of Jesus Christ, and His resurrection. And then picture after picture followed; there were ornamented letters, large and small, engravings in the text and at the heading of the chapters; 'The Annunciation,' an immense angel inundating with rays of light a slight, delicate-looking Mary; 'The Massacre of the Innocents,' where a cruel Herod was seen surrounded by dead bodies of dear little children; 'The Nativity,' where Saint Joseph is holding a candle, the light of which falls upon the face of the Infant Jesus, Who sleeps in His mother's arms; Saint John the Almoner, giving to the poor; Saint Matthias, breaking an idol; Saint Nicholas as a bishop, having at his right hand a little bucket filled with babies. And then, a little farther on, came the female saints: Agnes, with her neck pierced by a sword; Christina, torn by pincers; Genevieve, followed by her lambs; Juliana, being whipped; Anastasia, burnt; Maria the Egyptian, repenting in the desert; Mary of Magdalene, carrying the vase of precious ointment; and others and still others followed. There was an increasing terror and a piety in each one of them, making it a history

which weighs upon the heart and fills the eyes with tears.

But, little by little, Angelique was curious to know exactly what these engravings represented. The two columns of closely-printed text, the impression of which remained very black upon the papers yellowed by time, frightened her by the strange, almost barbaric look of the Gothic letters. Still, she accustomed herself to it, deciphered these characters, learned the abbreviations and the contractions, and soon knew how to explain the turning of the phrases and the old-fashioned words. At last she could read it easily, and was as enchanted as if she were penetrating a mystery, and she triumphed over each new difficulty that she conquered.

Under these laborious shades a whole world of light revealed itself. She entered, as it were, into a celestial splendour. For now the few classic books they owned, so cold and dry, existed no longer. The Legend alone interested her. She bent over it, with her forehead resting on her hands, studying it so intently, that she no longer lived in the real life, but, unconscious of time, she seemed to see, mounting from the depths of the unknown, the broad expansion of a dream.

How wonderful it all was ! These saints and virgins ! They are born predestined ; solemn voices announce their coming, and their mothers have marvellous dreams about them. All are beautiful, strong, and victorious. Great lights surround them, and their countenances are resplendent. Dominic has a star on his forehead. They read the minds of men and repeat their thoughts aloud. They have the gift of prophecy, and their predictions are always realised. Their number is infinite. Among them are bishops and monks, virgins and fallen

women, beggars and nobles of a royal race, unclothed hermits who live on roots, and old men who inhabit caverns with goats. Their history is always the same. They grow up for Christ, believe fervently in Him, refuse to sacrifice to false gods, are tortured, and die filled with glory. Emperors were at last weary of persecuting them. Andrew, after being attached to the cross, preached during two days to twenty thousand persons. Conversions were made in masses, forty thousand men being baptised at one time. When the multitudes were not converted by the miracles, they fled terrified. The saints were accused of sorcery; enigmas were proposed to them, which they solved at once; they were obliged to dispute questions with learned men, who remained speechless before them. As soon as they entered the temples of sacrifice the idols were overthrown with a breath, and were broken to pieces. A virgin tied her sash around the neck of a statue of Venus, which at once fell in powder. The earth trembled. The Temple of Diana was struck by lightning and destroyed; and the people revolting, civil wars ensued. Then often the executioners asked to be baptised; kings knelt at the feet of saints in rags who had devoted themselves to poverty. Sabina flees from the paternal roof. Paula abandons her five children. Mortifications of the flesh and fasts purify, not oil or water. Germanus covers his food with ashes. Bernard cares not to eat, but delights only in the taste of fresh water. Agatha keeps for three years a pebble in her mouth. Augustinus is in despair for the sin he has committed in turning to look after a dog who was running. Prosperity and health are despised, and joy begins with privations which kill the body. And it is thus

that, subduing all things, they live at last in gardens where the flowers are stars, and where the leaves of the trees sing. They exterminate dragons, they raise and appease tempests, they seem in their ecstatic visions to be borne above the earth. Their wants are provided for while living, and after their death friends are advised by dreams to go and bury them. Extraordinary things happen to them, and adventures far more marvellous than those in a work of fiction. And when their tombs are opened after hundreds of years, sweet odours escape therefrom.

Then, opposite the saints, behold the evil spirits!

'They often fly about us like insects, and fill the air without number. The air is also full of demons, as the rays of the sun are full of atoms. It is even like powder.' And the eternal contest begins. The saints are always victorious, and yet they are constantly obliged to renew the battle. The more the demons are driven away, the more they return. There were counted six thousand six hundred and sixty-six in the body of a woman whom Fortunatus delivered. They moved, they talked and cried, by the voice of the person possessed, whose body they shook as if by a tempest. At each corner of the highways an afflicted one is seen, and the first saint who passes contends with the evil spirits. They enter by the eyes, the ears, and by the mouth, and, after days of fearful struggling, they go out with loud groanings. Basilus, to save a young man, contends personally with the Evil One. Macarius was attacked when in a cemetery, and passed a whole night in defending himself. The angels, even at deathbeds, in order to secure the soul of the dying were obliged to beat the demons. At other times the contests are

only of the intellect and the mind, but are equally remarkable. Satan, who prowls about, assumes many forms, sometimes disguising himself as a woman, and again, even as a saint. But, once overthrown, he appears in all his ugliness: 'a black cat, larger than a dog, his huge eyes emitting flame, his tongue long, large, and bloody, his tail twisted and raised in the air, and his whole body disgusting to the last degree.' He is the one thing that is hated, and the only preoccupation. People fear him, yet ridicule him. One is not even honest with him. In reality, notwithstanding the ferocious appearance of his furnaces, he is the eternal dupe. All the treaties he makes are forced from him by violence or cunning. Feeble women throw him down: Margaret crushes his head with her feet, and Juliana beats him with her chain. From all this a serenity disengages itself, a disdain of evil, since it is powerless, and a certainty of good, since virtue triumphs. It is only necessary to cross one's self, and the Devil can do no harm, but yells and disappears, while the infernal regions tremble.

Then, in this combat of legions of saints against Satan are developed the fearful sufferings from persecution. The executioners expose to the flies the martyrs whose bodies are covered with honey; they make them walk with bare feet over broken glass or red-hot coals; put them in ditches with reptiles; chastise them with whips, whose thongs are weighted with leaden balls; nail them when alive in coffins, which they throw into the sea; hang them by their hair, and then set fire to them; moisten their wounds with quicklime, boiling pitch, or molten lead; make them sit on red-hot iron stools; burn their sides with torches; break their

bones on wheels, and torture them in every conceivable way. And, with all this, physical pain counts for nothing; indeed, it seems to be desired. Moreover, a continual miracle protects them. John drinks poison but is unharmed. Sebastian smiles although pierced with arrows; sometimes they remain in the air at the right or left of the martyr, or, launched by the archer, they return upon himself and put out his eyes. Molten lead is swallowed as if it were ice-water. Lions prostrate themselves, and lick their hands as gently as lambs. The gridiron of Saint Lawrence is of an agreeable freshness to him. He cries, 'Unhappy man, you have roasted one side, turn the other and then eat, for it is sufficiently cooked.' Cecilia, placed in a boiling bath, is refreshed by it. Christina exhorts those who would torture her. Her father had her whipped by twelve men, who at last drop from fatigue; she is then attached to a wheel, under which a fire is kindled, and the flame, turning to one side, devours fifteen hundred persons. She is then thrown into the sea, but the angels support her; Jesus comes to baptise her in person, then gives her to the charge of Saint Michael, that he may conduct her back to the earth; after that she is placed for five days in a heated oven, where she suffers not, but sings constantly. Vincent, who was exposed to still greater tortures, feels them not. His limbs are broken, he is covered with red-hot irons, he is pricked with needles, he is placed on a brazier of live coals, and then taken back to prison, where his feet are nailed to a post. Yet he still lives, and his pains are changed into a sweetness of flowers, a great light fills his dungeon, and angels sing with him, giving him rest as if he were on a bed of roses. The sweet sound of

singing and the fresh odour of flowers spread without in the room, and when the guards saw the miracle they were converted to the faith, and when Dacian heard of it, he was greatly enraged, and said, 'Do nothing more to him, for we are conquered.' Such was the excitement among the persecutors, it could only end either by their conversion or by their death. Their hands are paralysed ; they perish violently ; they are choked by fish-bones ; they are struck by lightning, and their chariots are broken. In the meanwhile, the cells of the martyrs are resplendent. Mary and the Apostles enter them at will, although the doors are bolted. Constant aid is given, apparitions descend from the skies, where angels are waiting, holding crowns of precious stones. Since death seems joyous, it is not feared, and their friends are glad when they succumb to it. On Mount Ararat ten thousand are crucified, and at Cologne eleven thousand virgins are massacred by the Huns. In the circuses they are devoured by wild beasts. Quirique, who, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, taught like a man, suffered martyrdom when but three years of age. Nursing-children reproved the executioners. The hope for celestial happiness deadened the physical senses and softened pain. Were they torn to pieces, or burnt, they minded it not. They never yielded, and they called for the sword, which alone could kill them. Eulalia, when at the stake, breathes the flame that she may die the more quickly. Her prayer is granted, and a white dove flies from her mouth and bears her soul to heaven.

Angelique marvelled greatly at all these accounts. So many abominations and such triumphant joy delighted her and carried her out of herself.

But other points in this Legend, of quite a different

nature, also interested her ; the animals, for instance, of which there were enough to fill an Ark of Noah. She liked the ravens and the eagles who fed the hermits.

Then what lovely stories there were about the lions. The serviceable one who found a resting-place in a field for Mary the Egyptian ; the flaming lion who protected virgins or maidens in danger ; and then the lion of Saint Jerome, to whose care an ass had been confided, and, when the animal was stolen, went in search of him and brought him back. There was also the penitent wolf, who had restored a little pig he had intended eating. Then there was Bernard, who excommunicates the flies, and they drop dead. Remi and Blaise feed birds at their table, bless them, and make them strong. Francis, ' filled with a dove-like simplicity,' preaches to them, and exhorts them to love God. A bird was on a branch of a fig-tree, and Francis, holding out his hand, beckoned to it, and soon it obeyed, and lighted on his hand. And he said to it, ' Sing, my sister, and praise the Lord.' And immediately the bird began to sing, and did not go away until it was told to do so.

All this was a continual source of recreation to Angelique, and gave her the idea of calling to the swallows, and hoping they might come to her.

Afterwards, there were certain accounts which she could not re-read without almost feeling ill, so much did she laugh.

The good giant Christopher, who carried the Infant Christ on his shoulders, delighted her so much as to bring tears to her eyes.

She was very merry over the misadventures of a certain Governor with the three chambermaids of Anastasia, whom he hoped to have found in the kitchen,

where he kissed the stove and the kettles, thinking he was embracing them. 'He went out therefrom very black and ugly, and his clothes quite smutched. And when his servants, who were waiting, saw him in such a state, they thought he was the Devil. Then they beat him with birch-rods, and, running away, left him alone.'

But that which convulsed her most with laughter, was the account of the blows given to the Evil One himself, especially when Juliana, having been tempted by him in her prison cell, administered such an extraordinary chastisement with her chain. 'Then the Provost commanded that Juliana should be brought before him; and when she came into his presence, she was drawing the Devil after her, and he cried out, saying, "My good lady Juliana, do not hurt me any more!" She led him in this way around the public square, and afterwards threw him into a deep ditch.'

Often Angelique would repeat to the Huberts, as they were all at work together, legends far more interesting than any fairy-tale. She had read them over so often that she knew them by heart, and she told in a charming way the story of the Seven Sleepers, who, to escape persecution, walled themselves up in a cavern, where they slept three hundred and seventy-seven years, and whose awakening greatly astonished the Emperor Theodosius. Then the Legend of Saint Clement with its endless adventures, so unexpected and touching, where the whole family, father, mother, and three sons, separated by terrible misfortunes, are finally re-united in the midst of the most beautiful miracles.

Her tears would flow at these recitals. She dreamed of them at night, she lived, as it were, only in this tragic and triumphant world of prodigy, in a supernatural

country where all virtues are recompensed by all imaginable joys.

When Angelique partook of her first Communion, it seemed as if she were walking, like the saints, a little above the earth. She was a young Christian of the primitive Church ; she gave herself into the hands of God, having learned from her book that she could not be saved without grace.

The Huberts were simple in their profession of faith. They went every Sunday to Mass, and to Communion on all great fête-days, and this was done with the tranquil humility of true belief, aided a little by tradition, as the chasubliers had from father to son always observed the Church ceremonies, particularly those at Easter.

Hubert himself had a tendency to imaginative fancies. He would at times stop his work and let fall his frame to listen to the child as she read or repeated the legends, and, carried away for the moment by her enthusiasm, it seemed as if his hair were blown about by the light breath of some invisible power. He was so in sympathy with Angelique, and associated her to such a degree with the youthful saints of the past, that he wept when he saw her in her white dress and veil. This day at church was like a dream, and they returned home quite exhausted. Hubertine was obliged to scold them both, for, with her excellent common-sense, she disliked exaggeration even in good things.

From that time she had to restrain the zeal of Angelique, especially her tendency to what she thought was charity, and to which she wished to devote herself. Saint Francis had wedded poverty ; Julien the Chaplain had called the poor his superiors ; Gervasius and Protis

had washed the feet of the most indigent, and Martin had divided his cloak with them. So she, following the example of Lucy, wished to sell everything that she might give. At first she disposed of all her little private possessions, then she began to pillage the house. But at last she gave without judgment and foolishly. One evening, two days after her Confirmation, being reprimanded for having thrown from the window several articles of underwear to a drunken woman, she had a terrible attack of anger like those when she was young ; then, overcome by shame, she was really ill and forced to keep her bed for a couple of days.

CHAPTER III

IN the meanwhile, weeks and months went by. Two years had passed. Angelique was now fourteen years of age and quite womanly. When she read the 'Golden Legend,' she would have a humming in her ears, the blood circulated quickly through the blue veins near her temples, and she felt a deep tenderness towards all these virgin saints.

Maidenhood is sister of the angels, the union of all good, the overthrow of evil, the domain of faith. It gives grace, it is perfection, which has only need to show itself to conquer. The action of the Holy Spirit rendered Lucy so heavy that a thousand men and five pair of oxen could not drag her away from her home. An officer who tried to kiss Anastasia was struck blind. Under torture, the purity of the virgins is always powerful; from their exquisite white limbs, torn by instruments, milk flows instead of blood. Ten different times the story is told of the young convert who, to escape from her family, who wish her to marry against her will, assumes the garb of a monk, is accused of some misdeed, suffers punishment without indicating herself, and at last triumphs by announcing her name. Eugenia is in this way brought before a judge, whom she recognises as her father and reveals herself to him. Ex-

ternally the combat of chastity recommences; always the thorns reappear. Thus the wisest saints shrink from being tempted. As the world is filled with snares, hermits flee to the desert, where they scourge themselves, throw themselves on the snow, or in beds of prickly herbs. A solitary monk covers his fingers with his mantle, that he may aid his mother in crossing a creek. A martyr bound to a stake, being tempted by a young girl, bites off his tongue with his teeth and spits it at her. All glorify the state of single blessedness. Alexis, very wealthy and in a high position, marries, but leaves his wife at the church-door. One weds only to die. Justina, in love with Cyprianus, converts him, and they walk together to their punishment. Cecilia, beloved by an angel, reveals the secret to Valerian on their wedding-day, and he, that he may see the spirit, consents to be baptised. He found in his room Cecilia talking with the angel, who held in his hand two wreaths of roses, and, giving one to Cecilia and one to Valerian, he said, 'Keep these crowns, like your hearts, pure and unspotted.' In many cases it was proved that death was stronger than love, and couples were united only as a challenge to existence. It was said that even the Virgin Mary at times prevented betrothals from ending in a marriage. A nobleman, a relative of the King of Hungary, renounced his claims to a young girl of marvellous beauty on this account. 'Suddenly our Blessed Lady appeared, and said to him: "If I am indeed so beautiful as you have called me, why do you leave me for another?"' And he became a most devout man for the rest of his life.'

Among all this saintly company, Angelique had her preferences, and there were those whose experiences

touched her to the heart, and helped her to correct her failings. Thus the learned Catherine, of high birth, enchanted her by her great scientific knowledge, when, only eighteen years of age, she was called by the Emperor Maximus to discuss certain questions with fifty rhetoricians and grammarians. She astonished and convinced them. 'They were amazed and knew not what to say, but they remained quiet. And the Emperor blamed them for their weakness in allowing themselves to be so easily conquered by a young girl.' The fifty professors then declared that they were converted. 'And as soon as the tyrant heard that, he had so terrible a fit of anger, that he commanded they should all be burned to death in the public square.' In her eyes Catherine was the invincible learned woman, as proud and dazzling in intellect as in beauty, just as she would have liked to be, that she might convert men, and be fed in prison by a dove, before having her head cut off. But Saint Elizabeth, the daughter of the King of Hungary, was for her a constant teacher and guide. Whenever she was inclined to yield to her violent temper, she thought of this model of gentleness and simplicity, who was at five years of age very devout, refusing to join her playmates in their sports, and sleeping on the ground, that, in abasing herself, she might all the better render homage to God. Later, she was the faithful, obedient wife of the Landgrave of Thuringia, always showing to her husband a smiling face, although she passed her nights in tears. When she became a widow she was driven from her estates, but was happy to lead the life of poverty. 'Her dress was so thin from use, that she wore a grey mantle, lengthened out by cloth of a different shade. The sleeves of her jacket had been torn,

and were mended with a material of another colour. The king, her father, wishing her to come to him, sent for her by a Count. And when the Count saw her clothed in such a way and spinning, overcome with surprise and grief, he exclaimed: 'Never before did one see the daughter of a Royal House in so miserable a garb, and never was one known to spin wool until now.' So Christian and sincere was her humility, that she ate black bread with the poorest peasants, nursed them when ill, dressed their sores without repugnance, put on coarse garments like theirs, and followed them in the church processions with bare feet. She was once washing the porringers and the utensils of the kitchen, when the maids, seeing her so out of place, urged her to desist, but she replied, 'Could I find another task more menial even than this, I would do it.' Influenced by her example, Angelique, who was formerly angry when obliged to do any cleaning in the kitchen, now tried to invent some extremely disagreeable task when she felt nervous and in need of control.

But more than Catherine, more than Elizabeth, far nearer and dearer to her than all the other saints, was Agnes, the child-martyr; and her heart leaped with joy on refinding in the 'Golden Legend' this virgin, clothed with her own hair, who had protected her under the Cathedral portal. What ardour of pure love, as she repelled the son of the Governor when he accosted her on her way from school! 'Go—leave me, minister of death, commencement of sin, and child of treason!' How exquisitely she described her beloved! 'I love the One whose Mother was a Virgin, and whose father was faithful to her, at whose beauty the sun and moon marvelled, and at whose touch the dead were made

alive.' And when Aspasien commanded that 'her throat should be cut by the sword,' she ascended into Paradise to be united to her 'betrothed, whiter and purer than silver-gilt.'

Always, when weary or disturbed, Angelique called upon and implored her, and it seemed as if peace came to her at once. She saw her constantly near her, and often she regretted having done or thought of things which would have displeased her.

One evening as she was kissing her hands, a habit which she still at times indulged in, she suddenly blushed and turned away, although she was quite alone, for it seemed as if the little saint must have seen her. Agnes was her guardian angel.

Thus, at fifteen Angelique was an adorable child. Certainly, neither the quiet, laborious life, nor the soothing shadows of the Cathedral, nor the legends of the beautiful saints, had made her an angel, a creature of absolute perfection. She was often angry, and certain weaknesses of character showed themselves, which had never been sufficiently guarded against; but she was always ashamed and penitent if she had done wrong, for she wished so much to be perfect. And she was so human, so full of life, so ignorant, and withal so pure in reality.

One day, on returning from a long excursion which the Huberts allowed her to take twice a year, on Pentecost Monday and on Assumption Day, she took home with her a sweetbriar bush, and then amused herself by replanting it in the narrow garden. She trimmed it and watered it well: it grew and sent out long branches, filled with odour. With her usual intensity, she watched it daily, but was unwilling to have it

grafted, as she wished to see if, by some miracle, it could not be made to bear roses. She danced around it, she repeated constantly : 'This bush is like me ; it is like me !' And if one joked her upon her great wild-rose bush, she joined them in their laughter, although a little pale, and with tears almost ready to fall. Her violet-coloured eyes were softer than ever, her half-opened lips revealed little white teeth, and her oval face had a golden aureole from her light wavy hair. She had grown tall without being too slight ; her neck and shoulders were exquisitely graceful ; her chest was full, her waist flexible ; and gay, healthy, of a rare beauty, she had an infinite charm, arising from the innocence and purity of her soul.

Every day the affection of the Huberts for her increased. They often talked together of their mutual wish to adopt her. Yet they took no active measures in that way, lest they might have cause to regret it. One morning, when the husband announced his final decision, his wife suddenly began to weep bitterly. To adopt a child ? Was not that the same as giving up all hope of having one of their own ? Yet it was useless for them to expect one now, after so many years of waiting, and she gave her consent, in reality delighted that she could call her her daughter. When Angelique was spoken to on the subject, she threw her arms around their necks, kissed them both, and was almost choked with tears of joy.

So it was agreed upon that she was always to remain with them in this house, which now seemed to be filled with her presence, rejuvenated by her youth, and penetrated by her laughter. But an unexpected obstacle was met with at the first step. The Justice of

the Peace, Monsieur Grandsire, on being consulted, explained to them the radical impossibility of adoption, since by law the adopted must be 'of age.' Then, seeing their disappointment, he suggested the expedient of a legal guardianship: any individual over fifty years of age can attach to himself a minor of fifteen years or less by a legal claim, on becoming their official protector. The ages were all right, so they were delighted, and accepted. It was even arranged that they should afterwards confer the title of adoption upon their ward by way of their united last will and testament, as such a thing would be permitted by the Code. Monsieur Grandsire, furnished with the demand of the husband and the authorisation of the wife, then put himself in communication with the Director of Public Aid, the general guardian for all abandoned children, whose consent it was necessary to have. Great inquiries were made, and at last the necessary papers were placed in Paris, with a certain Justice of the Peace chosen for the purpose. And all was ready except the official report which constitutes the legality of guardianship, when the Huberts suddenly were taken with certain scruples.

Before receiving Angelique into their family, ought not they to ascertain if she had any relatives on her side? Was her mother still alive? Had they the right to dispose of the daughter without being absolutely sure that she had willingly been given up and deserted? Then, in reality, the unknown origin of the child, which had troubled them long ago, came back to them now and made them hesitate. They were so tormented by this anxiety that they could not sleep.

Without any more talk, Hubert unexpectedly an-

nounced that he was going to Paris. Such a journey seemed like a catastrophe in his calm existence. He explained the necessity of it to Angelique, by speaking of the guardianship. He hoped to arrange everything in twenty-four hours. But once in the city, days passed; obstacles arose on every side. He spent a week there, sent from one to another, really doing nothing, and quite discouraged. In the first place, he was received very coldly at the Office of Public Assistance. The rule of the Administration is that children shall not be told of their parents until they are of age. So for two mornings in succession he was sent away from the office. He persisted, however, explained the matter to three secretaries, made himself hoarse in talking to an under-officer, who wished to counsel him that he had no official papers. The Administration were quite ignorant. A nurse had left the child there, 'Angelique Marie,' without naming the mother. In despair he was about to return to Beaumont, when a new idea impelled him to return for the fourth time to the office, to see the book in which the arrival of the infant had been noted down, and in that way to have the address of the nurse. That proved to be quite an undertaking. But at last he succeeded, and found it was a Madame Foucart, and that in 1850 she lived on the Rue des Deux-Ecus.

Then he recommenced his hunting up and down. The end of the Rue des Deux-Ecus had been demolished, and no shopkeeper in the neighbourhood recollected ever having heard of Madame Foucart. He consulted the directory, but there was no such name. Looking at every sign as he walked along, he called on one after another, and at last, in this way, he had

the good fortune to find an old woman, who exclaimed, in answer to his questions, 'What! do I know Madame Foucart? A most honourable person, but one who has had many misfortunes. She lives on the Rue de Censier, quite at the other end of Paris.' He hastened there at once.

Warned by experience, he determined now to be diplomatic. But Madame Foucart, an enormous woman, would not allow him to ask questions in the good order he had arranged them before going there. As soon as he mentioned the two names of the child, she seemed to be eager to talk, and she related its whole history in a most spiteful way. 'Ah! the child was alive! Very well; she might flatter herself that she had for a mother a most famous hussy? Yes, Madame Sidonie, as she was called since she became a widow, was a woman of a good family, having, it is said, a brother who was a minister, but that did not prevent her from being very bad.' And she explained that she had made her acquaintance when she kept, on the Rue Saint-Honoré, a little shop where they dealt in fruit and oil from Provence, she and her husband, when they came from Plassans, hoping to make their fortune in the city. The husband died and was buried, and soon after Madame Sidonie had a little daughter, which she sent at once to the hospital, and never after even inquired for her, as she was 'a heartless woman, cold as a protest and brutal as a sheriff's aid.' A fault can be pardoned, but not ingratitude! Was not it true that, obliged to leave her shop as she was so heavily in debt, she had been received and cared for by Madame Foucart? And when in her turn she herself had fallen into difficulties, she had never been able to obtain from

Madame Sidonie, even the month's board she owed her, nor the fifteen francs she had once lent her. To-day the 'hateful thing' lived on the Rue de Faubourg-Poissonnière, where she had a little apartment of three rooms. She pretended to be a cleaner and mender of lace, but she sold a good many other things. Ah! yes! such a mother as that it was best to know nothing about!

An hour later, Hubert was walking round the house where Madame Sidonie lived. He saw through the window a woman, thin, pale, coarse-looking, wearing an old black gown, stained and greased. Never could the heart of such a person be touched by the recollection of a daughter whom she had only seen on the day of its birth. He concluded it would be best not to repeat, even to his wife, many things that he had just learned. Still he hesitated. Once more he passed by the place, and looked again. Ought not he to go in, to introduce himself, and to ask the consent of the unnatural parent? As an honest man, it was for him to judge if he had the right of cutting the tie there and for ever. Brusquely he turned his back, hurried away, and returned that evening to Beaumont.

Hubertine had just learned that the *procès-verbal* at Monsieur Grandsire's, for the guardianship of the child, had been signed. And when Angelique threw herself into Hubert's arms, he saw clearly by the look of supplication in her eyes, that she had understood the true reason of his journey.

Then he said quietly: 'My child, your mother is not living.' Angelique wept, as she kissed him most affectionately. After this the subject was not referred to. She was their daughter.

At Whitsuntide, this year, the Huberts had taken Angelique with them to lunch at the ruins of the Château d'Hauteceur, which overlooks the Ligneul, two leagues below Beaumont; and, after the day spent in running and laughing in the open air, the young girl still slept when, the next morning, the old house-clock struck eight.

Hubertine was obliged to go up and rap at her door.

'Ah, well! little lazy child! We have already had our breakfast, and it is late.'

Angelique dressed herself quickly and went down to the kitchen, where she took her rolls and coffee alone. Then, when she entered the workroom, where Hubert and his wife had just seated themselves, after having arranged their frames for embroidery, she said:

'Oh! how soundly I did sleep! I had quite forgotten that we had promised to finish this chasuble for next Sunday.'

This workroom, the windows of which opened upon the garden, was a large apartment, preserved almost entirely in its original state. The two principal beams of the ceiling, and the three visible cross-beams of support, had not even been whitewashed, and they were blackened by smoke and worm-eaten, while, through the openings of the broken plaster, here and there, the laths of the inner joists could be seen. On one of the stone corbels, which supported the beams, was the date 1463, without doubt the date of the construction of the building. The chimney-piece, also in stone, broken and disjointed, had traces of its original elegance, with its slender uprights, its brackets, its frieze with a

cornice, and its basket-shaped funnel terminating in a crown. On the frieze could be seen even now, as if softened by age, an ingenious attempt at sculpture, in the way of a likeness of Saint Clair, the patron of embroiderers. But this chimney was no longer used, and the fireplace had been turned into an open closet by putting shelves therein, on which were piles of designs and patterns. The room was now heated by a great bell-shaped cast-iron stove, the pipe of which, after going the whole length of the ceiling, entered an opening made expressly for it in the wall. The doors, already shaky, were of the time of Louis XIV. The original tiles of the floor were nearly all gone, and had been replaced, one by one, by those of a later style. It was nearly a hundred years since the yellow walls had been coloured, and at the top of the room they were almost of a greyish white, and, lower down, were scratched and spotted with saltpetre. Each year there was talk of repainting them, but nothing had yet been done, from a dislike of making any change.

Hubertine, busy at her work, raised her head as Angelique spoke and said :

‘You know that if our work is done on Sunday, I have promised to give you a basket of pansies for your garden.’

The young girl exclaimed gaily: ‘Oh, yes! that is true. Ah, well! I will do my best then! But where is my thimble? It seems as if all working implements take to themselves wings and fly away, if not in constant use.’

She slipped the old *doigtier* of ivory on the second joint of her little finger, and took her place on the other side of the frame, opposite to the window.

Since the middle of the last century there had not been the slightest modification in the fittings and arrangements of the workroom. Fashions changed, the art of the embroiderer was transformed, but there was still seen fastened to the wall the chantlate, the great piece of wood where was placed one end of the frame or work, while the other end was supported by a movable trestle. In the corners were many ancient tools—a little machine called a ‘diligent,’ with its wheels and its long pins, to wind the gold thread on the reels without touching it; a hand spinning-wheel; a species of pulley to twist the threads which were attached to the wall; rollers of various sizes covered with silks and threads used in the crochet embroidery. Upon a shelf was spread out an old collection of punches for the spangles, and there was also to be seen a valuable relic, in the shape of the classic chandelier in hammered brass which belonged to some ancient master-workman. On the rings of a rack made of a nailed leather strap were hung awls, mallets, hammers, irons to cut the vellum, and roughing chisels of bogwood, which were used to smooth the threads as fast as they were employed. And yet again, at the foot of the heavy oaken table on which the cutting-out was done, was a great winder, whose two movable reels of wicker held the skeins. Long chains of spools of bright-coloured silks strung on cords were hung near the case of drawers. On the floor was a large basket filled with empty bobbins. A pair of great shears rested on the straw seat of one of the chairs, and a ball of cord had just fallen on the floor, half unwound.

‘Oh! what lovely weather! What perfect weather!’

continued Angelique. 'It is a pleasure simply to live and to breathe.'

And before stooping to apply herself to her work, she delayed another moment before the open window, through which entered all the beauty of a radiant May morning.

CHAPTER IV

THE sun shone brightly on the roof of the Cathedral, a fresh odour of lilacs came up from the bushes in the garden of the Bishop. Angelique smiled, as she stood there, dazzled, and as if bathed in the springtide. Then, starting as if suddenly awakened from sleep, she said :

‘Father, I have no more gold thread for my work.’

Hubert, who had just finished pricking the tracing of the pattern of a cope, went to get a skein from the case of drawers, cut it, tapered off the two ends by scratching the gold which covered the silk, and he brought it to her rolled up in parchment.

‘Is that all you need?’

‘Yes, thanks.’

With a quick glance she had assured herself that nothing more was wanting; the needles were supplied with the different golds, the red, the green, and the blue; there were spools of every shade of silk; the spangles were ready; and the twisted wires for the gold lace were in the crown of a hat which served as a box, with the long fine needles, the steel pincers, the thimbles, the scissors, and the ball of wax. All these were on the frame even, or on the material stretched therein, which was protected by a thick brown paper.

She had threaded a needle with the gold thread. But at the first stitch it broke, and she was obliged to thread it again, breaking off tiny bits of the gold, which she threw immediately into the pasteboard waste-basket which was near her.

‘Now at last I am ready,’ she said, as she finished her first stitch.

Perfect silence followed. Hubert was preparing to stretch some material on another frame. He had placed the two heavy ends on the chantlate and the trestle directly opposite in such a way as to take lengthwise the red silk of the cope, the breadths of which Hubertine had just stitched together, and fitting the laths into the mortice of the beams, he fastened them with four little nails. Then, after smoothing the material many times from right to left, he finished stretching it and tacked on the nails. To assure himself that it was thoroughly tight and firm, he tapped on the cloth with his fingers and it sounded like a drum.

Angelique had become a most skilful worker, and the Huberts were astonished at her cleverness and taste. In addition to what they had taught her, she carried into all she did her personal enthusiasm, which gave life to flowers and faith to symbols. Under her hands, silk and gold seemed animated; the smaller ornaments were full of mystic meaning; she gave herself up to it entirely, with her imagination constantly active and her firm belief in the infinitude of the invisible world.

The Diocese of Beaumont had been so charmed with certain pieces of her embroidery, that a clergyman who was an archæologist, and another who was an admirer of pictures, had come to see her, and were in raptures before her Virgins, which they compared to the simple,

gracious figures of the earliest masters. There was the same sincerity, the same sentiment of the beyond, as if encircled in the minutest perfection of detail. She had the real gift of design, a miraculous one indeed, which, without a teacher, with nothing but her evening studies by lamplight, enabled her often to correct her models, to deviate entirely from them, and to follow her own fancies, creating beautiful things with the point of her needle. So the Huberts, who had always insisted that a thorough knowledge of the science of drawing was necessary to make a good embroiderer, were obliged to yield before her, notwithstanding their long experience. And, little by little, they modestly withdrew into the background, becoming simply her aids, surrendering to her all the most elaborate work, the under part of which they prepared for her.

From one end of the year to the other, what brilliant and sacred marvels passed through her hands! She was always occupied with silks, satins, velvets, or cloths of gold or silver. She embroidered chasubles, stoles, maniples, copes, dalmatics, mitres, banners, and veils for the chalice and the pyx. But, above all, their orders for chasubles never failed, and they worked constantly at those vestments, with their five colours: the white, for Confessors and Virgins; the red, for Apostles and Martyrs; the black, for the days of fasting and for the dead; the violet, for the Innocents; and the green, for fête-days. Gold was also often used in place of white or of green. The same symbols were always in the centre of the Cross: the monograms of Jesus and of the Virgin Mary, the triangle surrounded with rays, the lamb, the pelican, the dove, a chalice, a monstrance, and a bleeding heart pierced with thorns; while higher

up and on the arms were designs, or flowers, all the ornamentation being in the ancient style, and all the flora in large blossoms, like anemones, tulips, peonies, pomegranates, or hortensias. No season passed in which she did not remake the grapes and thorns symbolic, putting silver on black, and gold on red. For the most costly vestments, she varied the pictures of the heads of saints, having, as a central design, the Annunciation, the Last Supper, or the Crucifixion. Sometimes the orfrees were worked on the original material itself; at others, she applied bands of silk or satin on brocades of gold cloth, or of velvet. And all this efflorescence of sacred splendour was created, little by little, by her deft fingers. At this moment the vestment on which Angelique was at work was a chasuble of white satin, the cross of which was made by a sheaf of golden lilies intertwined with bright roses, in various shades of silk. In the centre, in a wreath of little roses of dead gold, was the monogram of the Blessed Virgin, in red and green gold, with a great variety of ornaments.

For an hour, during which she skilfully finished the little roses, the silence had not been broken even by a single word. But her thread broke again, and she re-threaded her needle by feeling carefully under the frame, as only an adroit person can do. Then, as she raised her head, she again inhaled with satisfaction the pure, fresh air that came in from the garden.

‘Ah!’ she said softly, ‘how beautiful it was yesterday! The sunshine is always perfect.’

Hubertine shook her head as she stopped to wax her thread.

‘As for me, I am so wearied, it seems as if I had no

arms, and it tires me to work. But that is not strange, for I so seldom go out, and am no longer young and strong, as you are at sixteen.'

Angelique had reseated herself and resumed her work. She prepared the lilies by sewing bits of vellum on certain places that had been marked, so as to give them relief, but the flowers themselves were not to be made until later, for fear the gold be tarnished were the hands moved much over it.

Hubert, who, having finished arranging the material in its frame, was about drawing with pumice the pattern of the cope, joined in the conversation and said: 'These first warm days of spring are sure to give me a terrible headache.'

Angelique's eyes seemed to be vaguely lost in the rays which now fell upon one of the flying buttresses of the church, as she dreamily added: 'Oh no, father, I do not think so. One day in the lively air, like yesterday, does me a world of good.'

Having finished the little golden leaves, she began one of the large roses, near the lilies. Already she had threaded several needles with the silks required, and she embroidered in stitches varying in length, according to the natural position and movement of the petals, and notwithstanding the extreme delicacy and absorbing nature of this work, the recollections of the previous day, which she lived over again in thought and in silence, now came to her lips, and crowded so closely upon each other that she no longer tried to keep them back. So she talked of their setting out upon their expedition, of the beautiful fields they crossed, of their lunch over there in the ruins of Hauteceur, upon the flagstones of a little room whose tumbledown walls

towered far above the Ligneul, which rolled gently among the willows fifty yards below them.

She was enthusiastic over these crumbling ruins, and the scattered blocks of stone among the brambles, which showed how enormous the colossal structure must have been as, when first built, it commanded the two valleys. The donjon remained, nearly two hundred feet in height, discoloured, cracked, but nevertheless firm, upon its foundation pillars fifteen feet thick. Two of its towers had also resisted the attacks of Time—that of Charlemagne and that of David—united by a heavy wall almost intact. In the interior, the chapel, the court-room, and certain chambers were still easily recognised; and all this appeared to have been built by giants, for the steps of the stairways, the sills of the windows, and the benches on the terraces, were all on a scale far out of proportion for the generation of to-day. It was, in fact, quite a little fortified city. Five hundred men could have sustained there a siege of thirty months without suffering from want of ammunition or of provisions. For two centuries the bricks of the lowest story had been disjoined by the wild roses; lilacs and laburnums covered with blossoms the rubbish of the fallen ceilings; a plane-tree had even grown up in the fireplace of the guardroom. But when, at sunset, the outline of the donjon cast its long shadow over three leagues of cultivated ground, and the colossal Château seemed to be rebuilt in the evening mists, one still felt the great strength, and the old sovereignty, which had made of it so impregnable a fortress that even the kings of France trembled before it.

‘And I am sure,’ continued Angelique, ‘that it is inhabited by the souls of the dead, who return at night.’

All kinds of noises are heard there; in every direction are monsters who look at you, and when I turned round as we were coming away, I saw great white figures fluttering above the wall. But, mother, you know all the history of the castle, do you not?’

Hubertine replied, as she smiled in an amused way: ‘Oh! as for ghosts, I have never seen any of them myself.’

But in reality, she remembered perfectly the history, which she had read long ago, and to satisfy the eager questionings of the young girl, she was obliged to relate it over again.

The land belonged to the Bishopric of Rheims, since the days of Saint Remi, who had received it from Clovis.

An archbishop, Severin, in the early years of the tenth century, had erected at Hauteceur a fortress to defend the country against the Normans, who were coming up the river Oise, into which the Ligneul flows.

In the following century a successor of Severin gave it in fief to Norbert, a younger son of the house of Normandy, in consideration of an annual quit-rent of sixty sous, and on the condition that the city of Beaumont and its church should remain free and unincumbered. It was in this way that Norbert I. became the head of the Marquesses of Hauteceur, whose famous line from that date became so well known in history. Hervé IV., excommunicated twice for his robbery of ecclesiastical property, became a noted highwayman, who killed, on a certain occasion, with his own hands, thirty citizens, and his tower was razed to the ground by Louis le Gros, against whom he had dared to declare war. Raoul I., who went to the Crusades with

Philip Augustus, perished before Saint Jean d'Acre, having been pierced through the heart by a lance. But the most illustrious of the race was John V., the Great, who, in 1225, rebuilt the fortress, finishing in less than five years this formidable Château of Hauteceur, under whose shelter he, for a moment, dreamed of aspiring to the throne of France, and after having escaped from being killed in twenty battles, he at last died quietly in his bed, brother-in-law to the King of Scotland. Then came Felician III., who made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem barefooted; Hervé VII., who asserted his claims to the throne of Scotland; and still many others, noble and powerful in their day and generation, down to Jean IX., who, under Mazarin, had the grief of assisting at the dismantling of the castle. After a desperate siege, the vaults of the towers and of the donjon were blown up with powder, and the different constructions were set on fire; where Charles VI. had been sent to rest, and to turn his attention from his vagaries, and where, nearly two hundred years later, Henri IV. had passed a week as Gabrielle D'Estress. Thenceforth, all these royal souvenirs had passed into oblivion.

Angelique, without stopping the movement of her needle, listened eagerly, as if the vision of these past grandeurs rose up from her frame, in proportion as the rose grew there in its delicate life of colour. Her ignorance of general history enlarged facts, and she received them as if they were the basis of a marvellous legend. She trembled with delight, and, transported by her faith, it seemed as if the reconstructed Château mounted to the very gates of heaven, and the Hauteceurs were cousins to the Virgin Mary.

When there was a pause in the recital she asked,

‘Is not our new Bishop, Monseigneur d’Hauteceur, a descendant of this noted family?’

Hubertine replied that Monseigneur must belong to the younger branch of the family, as the elder branch had been extinct for a very long time. It was, indeed, a most singular return, as for centuries the Marquesses of Hauteceur and the clergy of Beaumont had been hostile to each other. Towards 1150 an abbot undertook to build a church, with no other resources than those of his Order; so his funds soon gave out, when the edifice was no higher than the arches of the side chapels, and they were obliged to cover the nave with a wooden roof. Eighty years passed, and Jean V. came to rebuild the Château, when he gave three hundred thousand pounds, which, added to other sums, enabled the work on the church to be continued. The nave was finished, but the two towers and the great front were terminated much later, towards 1430, in the full fifteenth century. To recompense Jean V. for his liberality, the clergy accorded to him, for himself and his descendants, the right of burial in a chapel of the apse, consecrated to St. George, and which, since that time, had been called the Chapel Hauteceur. But these good terms were not of long duration. The freedom of Beaumont was put in constant peril by the Château, and there were continual hostilities on the questions of tribute and of precedence. One especially, the right of paying toll, which the nobles demanded for the navigation of the Ligneul, perpetuated the quarrels. Then it was that the great prosperity of the lower town began, with its manufacturing of fine linen and lace, and from this epoch the fortune of Beaumont increased daily, while that of Hauteceur diminished,

until the time when the castle was dismantled and the church triumphed. Louis XIV. made of it a cathedral, a bishop's palace was built in the old enclosure of the monks, and, by a singular chain of circumstances, to-day a member of the family of Hauteccœur had returned as a bishop to command the clergy, who, always powerful, had conquered his ancestors, after a contest of four hundred years.

'But,' said Angelique, 'Monseigneur has been married, and has not he a son at least twenty years of age?'

Hubertine had taken up the shears to remodel one of the pieces of vellum.

'Yes,' she replied, 'the Abbot Cornille told me the whole story, and it is a very sad history. When but twenty years of age, Monseigneur was a captain under Charles X. In 1830, when only four-and-twenty, he resigned his position in the army, and it is said that from that time until he was forty years of age he led an adventurous life, travelling everywhere and having many strange experiences. At last, one evening, he met, at the house of a friend in the country, the daughter of the Count de Valencay, Mademoiselle Pauline, very wealthy, marvellously beautiful, and scarcely nineteen years of age, twenty-two years younger than himself. He fell violently in love with her, and, as she returned his affection, there was no reason why the marriage should not take place at once. He then bought the ruins of Hauteccœur for a mere song—ten thousand francs, I believe—with the intention of repairing the Château and installing his wife therein when all would be in order and in readiness to receive her. In the meanwhile they went to

live on one of his family estates in Anjou, scarcely seeing any of their friends, and finding in their united happiness the days all too short. But, alas! at the end of a year Pauline had a son and died.

Hubert, who was still occupied with marking out his pattern, raised his head, showing a very pale face as he said in a low voice: 'Oh! the unhappy man!'

'It was said that he himself almost died from his great grief,' continued Hubertine. 'At all events, a fortnight later he entered into holy Orders, and soon became a priest. That was twenty years ago, and now he is a bishop. But I have also been told that during all this time he has refused to see his son, the child whose birth cost the life of its mother. He had placed him with an uncle of his wife's, an old abbot, not wishing even to hear of him, and trying to forget his existence. One day a picture of the boy was sent him, but in looking at it he found so strong a resemblance to his beloved dead that he fell on the floor unconscious and stiff, as if he had received a blow from a hammer. . . . Now age and prayer have helped to soften his deep grief, for yesterday the good Father Cornille told me that Monseigneur had just decided to send for his son to come to him.'

Angelique, having finished her rose, so fresh and natural that a perfume seemed to be exhaled from it, looked again through the window into the sunny garden, and, as if in a reverie, she said in a low voice: 'The son of Monseigneur!'

Hubertine continued her story.

'It seems that the young man is handsome as a god, and his father wished him to be educated for the priesthood. But the old abbot would not consent to

that, saying that the youth had not the slightest inclination in that direction. And then, to crown all, his wealth, it is said, is enormous. Two million pounds sterling! Yes, indeed! His mother left him a tenth of that sum, which was invested in land in Paris, where the increase in the price of real estate has been so great, that to day it represents fifty millions of francs. In short, rich as a king!’

‘Rich as a king, beautiful as a god!’ repeated Angelique unconsciously, in her dreamy voice.

And with one hand she mechanically took from the frame a bobbin wound with gold thread, in order to make the open-work centre of one of the large lilies. After having loosened the end from the point of the reel, she fastened it with a double stitch of silk to the edge of the vellum which was to give a thickness to the embroidery. Then, continuing her work, she said again, without finishing her thought, which seemed lost in the vagueness of its desire, ‘Oh! as for me, what I would like, that which I would like above all else——’

The silence fell again, deep and profound, broken only by the dull sound of chanting which came from the church. Hubert arranged his design by repassing with a little brush all the perforated lines of the drawing, and thus the ornamentation of the cope appeared in white on the red silk. It was he who first resumed speaking.

‘Ah! those ancient days were magnificent! Noblemen then wore costumes weighted with embroidery. At Lyons, material was sometimes sold for as much as six hundred francs an ell. One ought to read the by-laws and regulations of the Guild of Master Workmen, where it is laid down that “The embroiderers of the

King have always the right to summon, by armed force if necessary, the workmen of other masters." . . . And then we had coats of arms, too! Azure, a fesse engrailed or, between three fleurs-de-lys of the same, two of them being near the top and the third in the point. Ah! it was indeed beautiful in the days of long ago!

He stopped a moment, tapping the frame with his fingers to shake off the dust. Then he continued:

'At Beaumont they still have a legend about the Hauteceurs, which my mother often related to me when I was a child. . . . A frightful plague ravaged the town, and half of the inhabitants had already fallen victims to it, when Jean V., he who had rebuilt the fortress, perceived that God had given him the power to contend against the scourge. Then he went on foot to the houses of the sick, fell on his knees, kissed them, and as soon as his lips had touched them, while he said, "If God is willing, I wish it," the sufferers were healed. And lo! that is why these words have remained the device of the Hauteceurs, who all have since that day been able to cure the plague. . . . Ah! what a proud race of men! A noble dynasty! Monseigneur himself is called Jean XII., and the first name of his son must also be followed by a number, like that of a prince.'

He stopped. Each one of his words lulled and prolonged the reverie of Angelique. She continued, in a half-singing tone: 'Oh! what I wish for myself! That which I would like above all else——'

Holding the bobbin, without touching the thread, she twisted the gold by moving it from left to right alternately on the vellum, fastening it at each turn with

a stitch in silk. Little by little the great golden lily blossomed out.

Soon she continued: 'Yes, what I would like above all would be to marry a prince—a prince whom I had never seen; who would come towards sunset, just before the waning daylight, and would take me by the hand and lead me to his palace. And I should wish him to be very handsome, as well as very rich! Yes, the most beautiful and the wealthiest man that had ever been seen on the earth! He should have superb horses that I could hear neighing under my windows, and jewels which he would pour in streams into my lap, and gold that would fall from my hands in a deluge when I opened them. And what I wish still further is, that this prince of mine should love me to distraction, so that I might also love him desperately. We would then remain very young, very good, and very noble, for ever!'

Hubert, leaving his work, had approached her smilingly; whilst Hubertine, in a friendly way, shook her finger at the young girl.

'Oh, what a vain little creature! Ah! ambitious child, you are quite incorrigible. Now, you are quite beside yourself with your need of being a queen. At all events such a dream is much better than to steal sugar and to be impertinent. But really, you must not indulge in such fancies. It is the Evil One who prompts them, and it is pride that speaks, as well as passion.'

Gay and candid, Angelique looked her in the face as she said: 'But mother, mother mine, what are you saying? Is it, then, a sin to love that which is rich and beautiful? I love it because it is rich and beautiful, and so cheers my heart and soul. A beautiful object

brightens everything that is near it, and helps one to live, as the sun does. You know very well that I am not selfish. Money? Oh! you would see what a good use I would make of it, if only I had it in abundance! I would rain it over the town; it should be scattered among the miserable. Think what a blessing it would be to have no more poverty! In the first place, as for you and my father, I would give you everything. You should be dressed in robes and garments of brocades, like the lords and ladies of the olden time.'

Hubertine shrugged her shoulders and smiled. 'It is ridiculous,' she said. 'But, my dear child, you must remember that you are poor, and that you have not a penny for your marriage-portion. How can you, then, for a moment dream of a prince? Are you, then, so desirous to marry a prince?'

'Why should not I wish to marry such a man?' And she looked quite amazed, as she continued: 'Marry him? Of course I would do so. Since he would have plenty of money, what difference would it make if I had none? I should owe everything to him, and on that very account I should love him all the more deeply.'

This victorious reasoning enchanted Hubert, who seemed carried above the earth by Angelique's enthusiasm. He would willingly have accompanied her on the wings of a cloud to the regions of fancy.

'She is right,' he exclaimed.

But his wife glanced at him reprovingly. She became quite stern.

'My child, you will think differently later on, when you know life better.'

'Life?—but I know it already.'

'How is it possible for you to know it? You are

too young ; you are ignorant of evil. Yet evil exists and is very powerful.'

' Evil—evil ?'

Angelique repeated the word very slowly, as if to penetrate its meaning. And in her pure eyes was a look of innocent surprise. Evil ? She knew all about it, for she had read of it in the 'Golden Legend.' Was not evil Satan himself ? And had not she seen how, although he constantly reappeared, he was always overthrown ? After every battle he remained crushed to earth, thoroughly conquered, and in a most pitiable state.

' Evil ? Ah, mother mine, if you knew how little I fear it ! It is only necessary once to conquer it, and afterwards life is all happiness.'

Hubertine appeared troubled and looked anxious.

' You will make me almost regret having brought you up in this house, alone with us two, and away from the world as it were. I am really afraid that some day we shall regret having kept you in such complete ignorance of the realities of life. What Paradise are you looking for ? What is your idea of the world ?'

A look of hope brightened the face of the young girl, while, bending forward, she still moved the bobbin back and forth with a continuous, even motion.

' You then really think, mother, that I am very foolish, do you not ? This world is full of brave people. When one is honest and industrious, one is always rewarded. I know also that there are some bad people, but they do not count. We do not associate with them, and they are soon punished for their misdeeds. And then, you see, as for the world, it produces on me, from a distance, the effect of a great garden ; yes, of an im-

mense park, all filled with flowers and with sunshine. It is such a blessing to live, and life is so sweet that it cannot be bad.'

She grew excited, as if intoxicated by the brightness of the silks and the gold threads she manipulated so well with her skilful fingers.

'Happiness is a very simple thing. We are happy, are we not? All three of us? And why? Simply because we love each other. Then, after all, it is no more difficult than that; it is only necessary to love and to be loved. So, you see, when the one I expect really comes, we shall recognise each other immediately. It is true I have not yet seen him, but I know exactly what he ought to be. He will enter here and will say: "I have come in search of you." And I shall reply: "I expected you, and will go with you." He will take me with him, and our future will be at once decided upon. He will go into a palace, where all the furniture will be of gold, encrusted in diamonds. Oh, it is all very simple!'

'You are crazy; so do not talk any more,' interrupted Hubertine, coldly.

And seeing that the young girl was still excited, and ready to continue to indulge in her fancies, she continued to reprove her.

'I beg you to say no more, for you absolutely make me tremble. Unhappy child! when we really marry you to some poor mortal you will be crushed, as you fall to earth from these heights of the imagination. Happiness, for the greater part of the world, consists in humility and obedience.'

Angelique continued to smile with an almost obstinate tranquillity.

‘I expect him, and he will come.’

‘But she is right,’ exclaimed Hubert, again carried away by her enthusiasm. ‘Why need you scold her? She is certainly pretty, and dainty enough for a king. Stranger things than that have happened, and who knows what may come?’

Sadly Hubertine looked at him with her calm eyes.

‘Do not encourage her to do wrong, my dear. You know, better than anyone, what it costs to follow too much the impulses of one’s heart.’

He turned deadly pale, and great tears came to the edge of his eyelids. She immediately repented of having reproved him, and rose to offer him her hands. But gently disengaging himself, he said, stammeringly :

‘No, no, my dear ; I was wrong. Angelique, do you understand me? You must always listen to your mother. She alone is wise, and we are both of us very foolish. I am wrong ; yes, I acknowledge it.’

Too disturbed to sit down, leaving the cope upon which he had been working, he occupied himself in pasting a banner that was finished, although still in its frame. After having taken the pot of Flemish glue from the chest of drawers, he moistened with a brush the underside of the material, to make the embroidery firmer. His lips still trembled, and he remained quiet.

But if Angelique, in her obedience, was also still, she allowed her thoughts to follow their course, and her fancies mounted higher and still higher. She showed it in every feature—in her mouth, that ecstasy had half opened, as well as in her eyes, where the infinite depth of her visions seemed reflected. Now, this dream of a

poor girl, she wove it into the golden embroidery. It was for this unknown hero that, little by little, there seemed to grow on the white satin the beautiful great lilies, and the roses, and the monogram of the Blessed Virgin. The stems of the lilies had all the gracious pointings of a jet of light, whilst the long slender leaves, made of spangles, each one being sewed on with gold twist, fell in a shower of stars. In the centre, the initials of Mary were like the dazzling of a relief in massive gold, a marvellous blending of lacework and of embossing, or goffering, which burnt like the glory of a tabernacle in the mystic fire of its rays. And the roses of delicately-coloured silks seemed real, and the whole chasuble was resplendent in its whiteness of satin, which appeared covered almost miraculously with its golden blossoms.

After a long silence, Angelique, whose cheeks were flushed by the blood which mounted into them from her excitement, raised her head, and, looking at Hubertine, said again, a little maliciously :

‘I expect him, and he will come.’

It was absurd for her thus to give loose reins to her imagination. But she was wilful. She was convinced in her own mind that everything would come to pass, eventually, as she wished it might. Nothing could weaken her happy conviction.

‘Mother,’ she added, ‘why do you not believe me, since I assure you it must be as I say?’

Hubertine shrugged her shoulders, and concluded the best thing for her to do was to tease her.

‘But I thought, my child, that you never intended being married. Your saints, who seem to have turned your head, they led single lives. Rather than do other-

wise they converted their lovers, ran away from their homes, and were put to death.'

The young girl listened and was confused. But soon she laughed merrily. Her perfect health, and all her love of life, rang out in this sonorous gaiety. 'The histories of the saints! But that was ages ago! Times have entirely changed since then. God having so completely triumphed, no longer demands that anyone should die for Him.'

When reading the Legend, it was the marvels which fascinated her, not the contempt of the world and the desire for death. She added: 'Most certainly I expect to be married; to love and to be loved, and thus be very happy.'

'Be careful, my dear,' said Hubertine, continuing to tease her. 'You will make your guardian angel, Saint Agnes, weep. Do not you know that she refused the son of the Governor, and preferred to die, that she might be wedded to Jesus?'

The great clock of the belfry began to strike; numbers of sparrows flew down from an enormous ivy-plant which framed one of the windows of the apse. In the workroom, Hubert, still silent, had just hung up the banner, moist from the glue, that it might dry, on one of the great iron hooks fastened to the wall.

The sun in the course of the morning had lightened up different parts of the room, and now it shone brightly upon the old tools—the diligent, the wicker winder, and the brass chandelier—and as its rays fell upon the two workers, the frame at which they were seated seemed almost on fire, with its bands polished by use, and with the various objects placed upon it, the reels of gold cord, the spangles, and the bobbins of silk.

Then, in this soft, charming air of spring, Angelique looked at the beautiful symbolic lily she had just finished. Opening wide her ingenuous eyes, she replied, with an air of confiding happiness, to Hubertine's last remark in regard to the child-martyr, Saint Agnes:

‘Ah, yes! But it was Jesus who wished it to be so.’

CHAPTER V

NOTWITHSTANDING her thoroughly cheerful nature, Angelique liked solitude; and it was to her the greatest of recreations to be alone in her room, morning and evening. There she gave herself up to her thoughts; there she indulged to the full scope in her most joyous fancies. Sometimes even during the day, when she could go there for a moment, she was as happy as if, in full freedom, she had committed some childish prank.

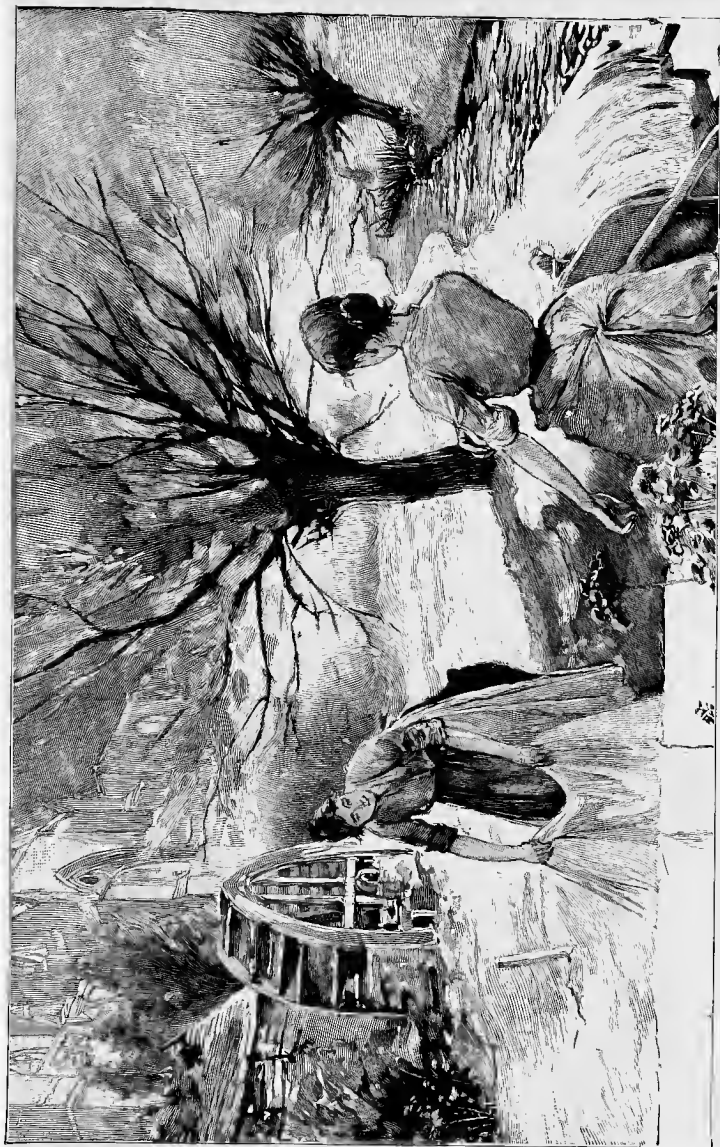
The chamber was very large, taking in at least half of the upper story, the other half being the garret. It was whitewashed everywhere; not only the walls and the beams, but the joists, even to the visible copings of the mansard part of the roof; and in this bare whiteness, the old oaken furniture seemed almost as black as ebony. At the time of the decoration of the sleeping-room below, and the improvements made in the parlour, the ancient furniture, which had been bought at various epochs, had been carried upstairs. There was a great carved chest of the Renaissance period, a table and chairs which dated from the reign of Louis XIII., an enormous bedstead, style Louis XIV., and a very handsome wardrobe, Louis XV. In the middle of these venerable old things a white porcelain

stove, and the little toilet-table, covered with a pretty oilcloth, seemed out of place and to mar the dull harmony. Curtained with an old-fashioned rose-coloured chintz, on which were bouquets of heather, so faded that the colour had become a scarcely perceptible pink, the enormous bedstead preserved above all the majesty of its great age.

But what pleased Angelique more than anything else was the little balcony on which the window opened. Of the two original windows, one of them, that at the left, had been closed by simply fastening it with nails, and the balcony, which formerly extended across the front of the building, was now only before the window at the right. As the lower beams were still strong, a new floor had been made, and above it an iron railing was firmly attached in place of the old worm-eaten wooden balustrade. This made a charming little corner, a quiet nook under the gable point, the leaden laths of which had been renewed at the beginning of the century. By bending over a little, the whole garden-front of the house could be seen in a very dilapidated state, with its sub-basement of little cut stones, its panels ornamented with imitation bricks, and its large bay window, which to-day had been made somewhat smaller. The roof of the great porch of the kitchen-door was covered with zinc. And above, the interduces of the top, which projected three feet or more, were strengthened by large, upright pieces of wood, the ends of which rested on the string-course of the first floor. All this gave to the balcony an appearance of being in a perfect vegetation of timber, as if in the midst of a forest of old wood, which was green with wallflowers and moss.

Since she occupied the chamber, Angelique had spent many hours there, leaning over the balustrade and simply looking. At first, directly under her was the garden, darkened by the eternal shade of the ever-green box-trees; in the corner nearest the church, a cluster of small lilac-bushes surrounded an old granite bench; while in the opposite corner, half hidden by a beautiful ivy which covered the whole wall at the end as if with a mantle, was a little door opening upon the Clos-Marie, a vast, uncultivated field. This Clos-Marie was the old orchard of the monks. A rivulet of purest spring-water crossed it, the Chevrotte, where the women who occupied the houses in the neighbourhood had the privilege of washing their linen; certain poor people sheltered themselves in the ruins of an old tumbledown mill; and no other persons inhabited this field, which was connected with the Rue Magloire simply by the narrow lane of the Guerdaches, which passed between the high walls of the Bishop's Palace and those of the Hôtel Voincourt. In summer, the centenarian elms of the two parks barred with their green-leaved tops the straight, limited horizon which in the centre was cut off by the gigantic brow of the Cathedral. Thus shut in on all sides, the Clos-Marie slept in the quiet peace of its abandonment, overrun with weeds and wild grass, planted with poplars and willows sown by the wind. Among the great pebbles the Chevrotte leaped, singing as it went, and making a continuous music as if of crystal.

Angelique was never weary of this out-of-the-way nook. Yet for seven years she had seen there each morning only what she had looked at on the previous evening. The trees in the little park of the Hôtel



Women had the privilege of washing their linen.

Voincourt, whose front was on the Grand Rue, were so tufted and bushy that it was only in the winter she could occasionally catch a glimpse of the daughter of the Countess, Mademoiselle Claire, a young girl of her own age.

In the garden of the Bishop was a still more dense thickness of branches, and she had often tried in vain to distinguish there the violet-coloured cassock of Monseigneur; and the old gate, with its Venetian slats above and at the sides, must have been fastened up for a very long time, for she never remembered to have seen it opened, not even for a gardener to pass through. Besides the washerwomen in the Clos, she always saw the same poor, ragged little children playing or sleeping in the grass.

The spring this year was unusually mild. She was just sixteen years of age, and until now she had been glad to welcome with her eyes alone the growing green again of the Clos-Marie under the April sunshine. The shooting out of the tender leaves, the transparency of the warm evenings, and all the reviving odours of the earth had simply amused her heretofore. But this year, at the first bud, her heart seemed to beat more quickly. As the grass grew higher and the wind brought to her all the strong perfumes of the fresh verdure, there was in her whole being an increasing agitation. Sudden inexplicable pain would at times seize her throat and almost choke her. One evening she threw herself, weeping, into Hubertine's arms, having no cause whatever for grief, but, on the contrary, overwhelmed with so great, unknown a happiness, that her heart was too full for restraint. In the night her dreams were delightful. Shadows seemed to

pass before her, and she fell into such an ecstatic state that on awakening she did not dare to recall them, so confused was she by the angelic visions of bliss. Sometimes, in the middle of her great bed, she would rouse herself suddenly, her two hands joined and pressed against her breast as if a heavy burden were weighing her down and almost suffocating her. She would then jump up, rush across the room in her bare feet, and, opening the window wide, would stand there, trembling slightly, until at last the pure fresh air calmed her. She was continually surprised at this great change in herself, as if the knowledge of joys and griefs hitherto unknown had been revealed to her in the enchantment of dreams, and that her eyes had been opened to natural beauties which surrounded her.

What—was it really true that the unseen lilacs and laburnums of the Bishop's garden had so sweet an odour that she could no longer breathe it without a flush of colour mounting to her cheeks? Never before had she perceived this warmth of perfume which now touched her as if with a living breath.

And again, why had she never remarked in preceding years a great Japanese Paulownia in blossom, which looked like an immense violet bouquet as it appeared between two elm-trees in the garden of the Voincourts? This year, as soon as she looked at it, her eyes grew moist, so much was she affected by the delicate tints of the pale purple flowers. She also fancied that the Chevrotte had never chattered so gaily over the pebbles among the willows on its banks. The river certainly talked; she listened to its vague words, constantly repeated, which filled her heart with trouble. Was it, then, no longer the field of other days, that every-

thing in it so astonished her and affected her senses in so unusual a way? Or, rather, was not she herself so changed that, for the first time, she appreciated the beauty of the coming into life of trees and plants?

But the Cathedral at her right, the enormous mass which obstructed the sky, surprised her yet more. Each morning she seemed to see it for the first time; she made constant discoveries in it, and was delighted to think that these old stones lived and had lived like herself. She did not reason at all on the subject, she had very little knowledge, but she gave herself up to the mystic flight of the giant, whose coming into existence had demanded three centuries of time, and where were placed one above the other the faith and the belief of generations. At the foundation, it was kneeling as if crushed by prayer, with the Romanesque chapels of the nave, and with the round arched windows, plain, unornamented, except by slender columns under the archivolts. Then it seemed to rise, lifting its face and hands towards heaven, with the pointed windows of its nave, built eighty years later; high, delicate windows, divided by mullions on which were broken bows and roses. Then again it sprung from the earth as if in ecstasy, erect, with the piers and flying buttresses of the choir finished and ornamented two centuries after in the fullest flamboyant Gothic, charged with its bell-turrets, spires, and pinnacles. A balustrade had been added, ornamented with trefoils, bordering the terrace on the chapels of the apse. Gargoyles at the foot of the flying buttresses carried off the water from the roofs. The top was also decorated with flowery emblems. The whole edifice seemed to burst into blossom in proportion as it approached the sky in

a continual upward flight, as if, relieved at being delivered from the ancient sacerdotal terror, it was about to lose itself in the bosom of a God of pardon and of love. It seemed to have a physical sensation which permeated it, made it light and happy, like a sacred hymn it had just heard sung, very pure and holy, as it passed into the upper air.

Moreover, the Cathedral was alive. Hundreds of swallows had constructed their nests under the borders of trefoil, and even in the hollows of the bell-turrets and the pinnacles, and they were continually brushing their wings against the flying buttresses and the piers which they inhabited. There were also the wood-pigeons of the elms in the Bishop's garden, who held themselves up proudly on the borders of the terraces, going slowly, as if walking merely to show themselves off. Sometimes, half lost in the blue sky, looking scarcely larger than a fly, a crow alighted on the point of a spire to smooth its wings. The old stones themselves were animated by the quiet working of the roots of a whole flora of plants, the lichens and the grasses, which pushed themselves through the openings in the walls. On very stormy days the entire apse seemed to awake and to grumble under the noise of the rain as it beat against the leaden tiles of the roof, running off by the gutters of the cornices and rolling from story to story with the clamour of an overflowing torrent. Even the terrible winds of October and of March gave to it a soul, a double voice of anger and of supplication, as they whistled through its forests of gables and arcades of roseate ornaments and of little columns. The sun also filled it with life from the changing play of its rays; from the early morning, which rejuvenated it with a

delicate gaiety, even to the evening, when, under the slightly lengthened-out shadows, it basked in the unknown.

And it had its interior existence. The ceremonies with which it was ever vibrating, the constant swinging of its bells, the music of the organ, and the chanting of the priests, all these were like the pulsation of its veins. There was always a living murmur in it: half-lost sounds, like the faint echo of a Low Mass; the rustling of the kneeling penitents, a slight, scarcely perceptible shivering, nothing but the devout ardour of a prayer said without words and with closed lips.

Now, as the days grew longer, Angelique passed more and more time in the morning and evening with her elbows on the balustrade of the balcony, side by side with her great friend, the Cathedral. She loved it the best at night, when she saw the enormous mass detach itself like a huge block on the starry skies. The form of the building was lost. It was with difficulty that she could even distinguish the flying buttresses, which were thrown like bridges into the empty space. It was, nevertheless, awake in the darkness, filled with a dream of seven centuries, made grand by the multitudes who had hoped or despaired before its altars. It was a continual watch, coming from the infinite of the past, going to the eternity of the future; the mysterious and terrifying wakefulness of a house where God Himself never sleeps. And in the dark, motionless, living mass, her looks were sure to seek the window of a chapel of the choir, on the level of the bushes of the Clos-Marie, the only one which was lighted up, and which seemed like an eye which was kept open all the night. Behind it, at the corner of a pillar, was an

ever-burning altar-lamp. In fact, it was the same chapel which the abbots of old had given to Jean V. d'Hauteceœur, and to his descendants, with the right of being buried there, in return for their liberality. Dedicated to Saint George, it had a stained-glass window of the twelfth century, on which was painted the legend of the saint. From the moment of the coming on of twilight, this historic representation came out from the shade, lighted up as if it were an apparition, and that was why Angelique was fascinated, and loved this particular point, as she gazed at it with her dreamy eyes.

The background of the window was blue and the edges red. Upon this sombre richness of colouring, the personages, whose flying draperies allowed their limbs to be seen, stood out in relief in clear light on the glass. Three scenes of the Legend, placed one above the other, filled the space quite to the upper arch. At the bottom, the daughter of the king, dressed in costly royal robes, on her way from the city to be eaten by the dreadful monster, meets Saint George near the pond, from which the head of the dragon already appears; and a streamer of silk bears these words: 'Good Knight, do not run any danger for me, as you can neither help me nor deliver me, but will have to perish with me.' Then in the middle the combat takes place, and the saint, on horseback, cuts the beast through and through. This is explained by the following words: 'George wielded so well his lance that he wounded the enemy and threw him upon the earth.' At last, at the top, the Princess is seen leading back into the city the conquered dragon: 'George said, "Tie your scarf around his neck, and do not be afraid of anything, oh

beautiful maiden, for when you have done so he will follow you like a well-trained dog.”’

When the window was new it must have been surmounted in the middle of the arch by an ornamental design. But later, when the chapel belonged to the Hauteceurs, they replaced the original work by their family coat of arms. And that was why, in the obscure nights, armorial bearings of a more recent date shone out above the painted legend. They were the old family arms of Hauteceur, quartered with the well-known shield of Jerusalem; the latter being argent, a cross potencée, or, between four crosselettes of the same; and those of the family, azure, a castle, or, on it a shield, sable, charged with a human heart, argent, the whole between three fleurs-de-lys, or; the shield was supported on the dexter and sinister sides by two wyverns, or; and surmounted by the silver helmet with its blue feathers, embossed in gold, placed frontwise, and closed by eleven bars, which belongs only to Dukes, Marshals of France, titled Lords and heads of Sovereign Corporations. And for motto were these words: ‘*Si Dieu volt, ie vueil.*’

Little by little, from having seen him piercing the monster with his lance, whilst the king’s daughter raised her clasped hands in supplication, Angelique became enamoured of Saint George. He was her hero. At the distance where she was she could not well distinguish the figures, and she looked at them as if in the aggrandisement of a dream; the young girl was slight, was a blonde, and, in short, had a face not unlike her own, while the saint was frank and noble looking, with the beauty of an archangel. It was as if she herself had just been saved, and she could have kissed his

hands with gratitude. And to this adventure, of which she dreamed confusedly, of a meeting on the border of a lake and of being rescued from a great danger by a young man more beautiful than the day, was added the recollection of her excursion to the Château of Haute-cœur, and a calling up to view of the feudal donjon, in its original state, peopled with the noble lords of olden times.

The arms glistened like the stars on summer nights; she knew them well, she read them easily, with their sonorous words, for she was so in the habit of embroidering heraldic symbols. There was Jean V., who stopped from door to door in the town ravaged by the plague, and went in to kiss the lips of the dying, and cured them by saying, '*Si Dieu volt, ie vueil.*' And Felician III., who, forewarned that a severe illness prevented Philippe le Bel from going to Palestine, went there in his place, barefooted and holding a candle in his hand, and for that he had the right of quartering the arms of Jerusalem with his own. Other and yet other histories came to her mind, especially those of the ladies of Haute-cœur, the 'happy dead,' as they were called in the Legend. In that family the women die young, in the midst of some great happiness. Sometimes two or three generations would be spared, then suddenly Death would appear, smiling, as with gentle hands he carried away the daughter or the wife of a Haute-cœur, the oldest of them being scarcely twenty years of age, at the moment when they were at the height of earthly love and bliss. For instance, Laurette, daughter of Raoul I., on the evening of her betrothal to her cousin Richard, who lived in the castle, having seated herself at her window in the Tower of David, saw him at his

window in the Tower of Charlemagne, and, thinking she heard him call her, as at that moment a ray of moonlight seemed to throw a bridge between them, she walked toward him. But when in the middle she made in her haste a false step and overpassed the ray, she fell, and was crushed at the foot of the tower. So since that day, each night when the moon is bright and clear, she can be seen walking in the air around the Château, which is bathed in white by the silent touch of her immense robe. Then Balbine, wife of Hervé VII., thought for six months that her husband had been killed in the wars. But, unwilling to give up all hope, she watched for him daily from the top of the donjon, and when at last she saw him one morning on the highway, returning to his home, she ran down quickly to meet him, but was so overcome with joy, that she fell dead at the entrance of the castle. Even at this day, notwithstanding the ruins, as soon as twilight falls, it is said she still descends the steps, runs from story to story, glides through the corridors and the rooms, and passes like a phantom through the gaping windows which open into the desert void. All return. Isabeau, Gudule, Vonne, Austreberthe, all these 'happy dead,' loved by the stern messenger, who spared them from the vicissitudes of life by taking them suddenly when, in early youth, they thought only of happiness. On certain nights this white-robed band fill the house as if with a flight of doves. To their number had lately been added the mother of the son of Monseigneur, who was found lifeless on the floor by the cradle of her infant, where, although ill, she dragged herself to die, in the fulness of her delight at embracing him. These had haunted the imagination of Angelique; she spoke of them as if

they were facts of recent occurrence, which might have happened the day before. She had read the names of Laurette and of Balbine on old memorial tablets let into the walls of the chapel. Then why should not she also die young and very happy, as they had? The armouries would glisten as now, the saint would come down from his place in the stained-glass window, and she would be carried away to heaven on the sweet breath of a kiss. Why not?

The 'Golden Legend' had taught her this: Was not it true that the miracle is really the common law, and follows the natural course of events? It exists, is active, works with an extreme facility on every occasion, multiplies itself, spreads itself out, overflows even uselessly, as if for the pleasure of contradicting the self-evident rules of Nature. Its power seems to be on the same plane as that of the Creator. Abrigan, King of Edeese, writes to Jesus, who replies to him. Ignatius receives letters from the Blessed Virgin. In all places the Mother and the Son appear, disguise themselves, and talk with an air of smiling good-nature. When Stephen meets them they are very familiar with him. All the virgins are wed to Jesus, and the martyrs mount to heaven, where they are to be united to Mary. And as for the angels and saints, they are the ordinary companions of men. They come, they go, they pass through walls, they appear in dreams, they speak from the height of clouds, they assist at births and deaths, they support those who are tortured, they deliver those who are in prison, and they go on dangerous missions. Following in their footsteps is an inexhaustible efflorescence of prodigies. Sylvester binds the mouth of a dragon with a thread. The earth rises to make a seat for

Hilary, whose companions wished to humiliate him. A precious stone falls into the chalice of Saint Loup. A tree crushes the enemies of Saint Martin; a dog lets loose a hare, and a great fire ceases to burn at his command. Mary the Egyptian walks upon the sea; honeybees fly from the mouth of Ambrosius at his birth. Continually saints cure diseases of the eye, withered limbs, paralysis, leprosy, and especially the plague. There is no disease that resists the sign of the Cross. In a crowd, the suffering and the feeble are placed together, that they may be cured in a mass, as if by a thunderbolt. Death itself is conquered, and resurrections are so frequent that they become quite an everyday affair. And when the saints themselves are dead the wonders do not cease, but are redoubled, and are like perennial flowers which spring from their tombs. It is said that from the head and the feet of Nicholas flowed two fountains of oil which cured every ill. When the tomb of Saint Cecilia was opened an odour of roses came up from her coffin. That of Dorothea was filled with manna. All the bones of virgins and of martyrs performed marvels: they confounded liars, they forced robbers to give back their stolen goods, they granted the prayers of childless wives, they brought the dying back to life. Nothing was impossible for them; in fact the invisible reigned, and the only law was the caprice of the supernatural. In the temples the sorcerers mix themselves up with the popular idea, and scythes cut the grass without being held, brass serpents move, and one hears bronze statues laugh and wolves sing. Immediately the saints reply and overwhelm them. The Host is changed into living food, sacred Christian images shed drops of blood, sticks set upright in the ground

blossom into flower, springs of pure water appear in dry places, warm loaves of bread multiply themselves at the feet of the needy, a tree bows down before some holy person, and so on. Then, again, decapitated heads speak, broken chalices mend themselves, the rain turns aside from a church to submerge a neighbouring palace, the robes of hermits never wear out, but renew themselves at each season like the skin of a beast. In Armenia at one time the persecutors threw into the sea the leaden coffins of five martyrs, and the one containing the body of Saint Bartholomew the Apostle took the lead, and the four others accompanied it as a guard of honour. So, all together, in regular order, like a fine squadron, they floated slowly along, urged by the breeze, through the whole length of the sea, until they reached the shores of Sicily.

Angelique was a firm believer in miracles. In her ignorance she lived surrounded by wonders. The rising of the stars, or the opening of a violet; each fact was a surprise to her. It would have appeared to her simply ridiculous to have imagined the world so mechanical as to be governed by fixed laws. There were so many things far beyond her comprehension, she felt herself so weak and helpless in the midst of forces whose power it was impossible to measure, that she would not even have suspected they existed, had it not been for the great questioning breath which at times passed over her face. So, trusting, and as thoroughly Christian as if belonging to the primitive Church, spiritually fed by her readings from the 'Golden Legend,' she gave herself up entirely into the hands of God, with only the spot of original sin to be cleansed from her soul. She had no liberty of action or freedom of will; God alone could

secure her salvation by giving her the gift of His grace. That grace had been already manifested by bringing her to the hospitable roof of the Huberts, where, under the shadow of the Cathedral, she could lead a life of submission, of purity, and of faith. She often heard within her soul the grumbings of hereditary tendency to evil, and asked herself what would have become of her had she been left on her native soil. Without doubt she would have been bad; while here, in this blessed corner of the earth, she had grown up free from temptation, strong and healthy. Was it not grace that had given her this home, where she was surrounded by such charming histories she had so easily committed to memory, where she had learned such perfect faith in the present and hope in the future, and where the invisible and unknown, or the miracles of ages, seemed natural to her, and quite on a level with her daily life? It had armed her for all combats, as heretofore it had armed the martyrs. And she created an imaginary experience for herself almost unknowingly. It was, in fact, the inevitable result of a mind overcharged and excited by fables; it was increased by her ignorance of the life within and about her, as well as from her loneliness. She had not had many companions, so all desires went from her only to return to her.

Sometimes she was in such a peculiar state that she would put her hands over her face, as if doubting her own identity. Was she herself only an illusion, and would she suddenly disappear some day and vanish into nothingness? Who would tell her the truth?

One evening in the following May, on this same balcony where she had spent so much time in vague dreams, she suddenly broke into tears. She was not

low-spirited in the least, but it seemed to her as if her anxiety arose from a vain expectation of a visit from someone. Yet who was there to come? It was very dark; the Clos-Marie marked itself out like a great black spot under the sky filled with stars, and she could but vaguely distinguish the heavy masses of the old elm-trees of the Bishop's garden, and of the park of the Hôtel Voincourt. Alone the window of the chapel sent out a little light. If no one were to come, why did her heart beat so rapidly? It was nothing new, this feeling of waiting, or of hope, but it was dated from the long ago, from her early youth; it was like a desire, a looking forward for something which had grown with her growth, and ended in this feverish anxiety of her seventeen years. Nothing would have surprised her, as for weeks she had heard the sound of voices in this mysterious corner, peopled by her imagination. The 'Golden Legend' had left there its supernatural world of saints and martyrs, and the miracle was all ready to appear there. She understood well that everything was animated, that the voices came from objects hitherto silent; that the leaves of the trees, the waters of the Chevrotte, and the stones of the Cathedral spoke to her. But what was it that all these whisperings from the invisible wished to explain? What did these unknown forces above and around her wish to do with her as they floated in the air? She kept her eyes fixed upon the darkness, as if she were at an appointed meeting with she knew not whom, and she waited, still waited, until she was overcome with sleep, whilst it seemed to her as if some supernatural power were deciding her destiny, irrespective of her will or wish.

For four evenings Angélique was nervous, and wept

a great deal in the darkness. She remained in her usual place and was patient. The atmosphere seemed to envelop her, and as it increased in density it oppressed her more and more, as if the horizon itself had become smaller and was shutting her in. Everything weighed upon her heart. Now there was a dull murmuring of voices in her brain; yet she was not able to hear them clearly, or to distinguish their meaning. It was as if Nature itself had taken possession of her, and the earth, with the vast heavens above it, had penetrated into her being. At the least sound her hands burned and her eyes tried to pierce the darkness. Was the wonderful event about to take place, the prodigy she awaited? No, there was nothing yet. It was probably merely the beating of the wings of a night bird. And she listened again, attentively, until she could distinguish the difference of sound between the leaves of the elms and the willows. At least twenty times she trembled violently when a little stone rolled in the rivulet, or a prowling animal jumped over the wall. She leaned forward; but there was nothing—still nothing.

At last, after some days, when at night a warmer darkness fell from the sky where no moon was visible, a change began. She felt it, but it was so slight, so almost imperceptible, she feared that she might have been mistaken in the little sound she heard, which seemed unlike the usual noises she knew so well. She held her breath, as the sound seemed very long in returning. At last it came again, louder than before, but equally confused. She would have said it came from a great distance, that it was a scarcely-defined step, and that the trembling of the air announced the approach of something out of sight and out of hearing. That which

she was expecting came slowly from the invisible slight movement of what surrounded her. Little by little it disengaged itself from her dream, like a realisation of the vague longings of her youth. Was it the Saint George of the chapel window, who had come down from his place and was walking on the grass in silence towards her? Just then, by chance, the altar-light was dimmed, so that she could not distinguish the faintest outline of the figures on the painted glass, but all seemed like a blue cloud of vapoury mist. That was all she heard or learned at that time of the mystery.

But on the morrow, at the same hour, by a like obscurity, the noise increased and approached a little nearer. It was certainly the sound of steps, of real steps, which walked upon the earth. They would stop for a moment, then recommence here and there, moving up and down, without her being able to say precisely where they were. Perhaps they came from the garden of the Voincourts, where some night pedestrian was lingering under the trees. Or it might be, rather, that they were in the tufted masses of the great lilac-bushes of the park of the Bishop, whose strong perfume made her almost ill. She might do her best to try to penetrate the darkness, it was only by her hearing that she was forewarned of the coming events, aided a little by her sense of smell, as the perfume of the flowers was increased as if a breath were mingled with it. And so for several nights the steps resounded under the balcony, and she listened as they came nearer, until they reached the walls under her feet. There they stopped, and a long silence followed, until she seemed almost to lose consciousness in this slow embrace of something of which she was ignorant.

Not long after, she saw one evening the little crescent of the new moon appear among the stars. But it soon disappeared behind the brow of the Cathedral, like a bright, living eye that the lid re-covers. She followed it with regret, and at each nightfall she awaited its appearance, watched its growth, and was impatient for this torch which would ere long light up the invisible. In fact, little by little, the Clos-Marie came out from the obscurity, with the ruins of its old mill, its clusters of trees, and its rapid little river. And then, in the light, creation continued. That which came from a vision ended in being embodied. For at first she only perceived that a dim shadow was moving under the moonlight. What was it, then? A branch moved to and fro by the wind? Or was it a large bat in constant motion? There were moments when everything disappeared, and the field slept in so deathly a stillness that she thought her eyes had deceived her. Soon there was no longer any doubt possible, for a dark object had certainly just crossed the open space and had glided from one willow-tree to another. It appeared, then disappeared, without her being able exactly to define it.

One evening she thought she distinguished the dim outline of two shoulders, and at once she turned her eyes towards the chapel window. It had a greyish tint, as if empty, for the moon shining directly upon it had deadened the light within. At that moment she noticed that the living shadow grew larger, as it approached continually nearer and nearer, walking in the grass at the side of the church. In proportion as she realised it was a fact that someone was there, she was overcome by an indefinable sensation, a nervous feeling that one has on being looked at by mysterious unseen eyes.

Certainly someone was there under the trees who was regarding her fixedly. She had on her hands and face, as it were, a physical impression of those long, ardent, yet timid looks; but she did not withdraw herself from them, because she knew they were pure, and came from the enchanted world of which she had read in the 'Golden Legend'; and, in the certainty of a promised happiness, her first anxiety was quickly changed into a delicious tranquillity.

One night, suddenly, on the ground whitened by the moon's rays, the shadow designed itself plainly and clearly. It was indeed that of a man whom she could not see, as he was hidden by the willows. As he did not move, she was able to look for a long time at his shadow.

From that moment Angelique had a secret. Her bare, whitewashed chamber was filled with it. She remained there for hours lying on her great bed—where she seemed lost, she was so little—her eyes closed, but not asleep, and seeing continually before her, in her waking dreams, this motionless shadow upon the earth. When she re-opened her eyes at dawn, her looks wandered from the enormous wardrobe to the old carved chest, from the porcelain stove to the little toilet-table, as if surprised at not seeing there the mysterious silhouette, which she could have so easily and precisely traced from memory. In her sleep she had seen it gliding among the pale heather-blossoms on her curtains. In her dreams, as in her waking hours, her mind was filled with it. It was a companion shadow to her own. She had thus a double being, although she was alone with her fancies.

This secret she confided to no one, not even to Hubertine, to whom, until now, she had always told

even her thoughts. When the latter, surprised at her gaiety, questioned her, she blushed deeply as she replied that the early spring had made her very happy. From morning to evening she hummed little snatches of song, like a bee intoxicated by the heat of the sun's rays. Never before had the chasubles she embroidered been so resplendent with silk and gold. The Huberts smiled as they watched her, thinking simply that this exuberance of spirits came from her state of perfect health. As the day waned she grew more excited, she sang at the rising of the moon, and as soon as the hour arrived she hurried to her balcony, and waited for the shadow to appear. During all the first quarters of the moon she found it exact at each rendezvous, erect and silent. But that was all. What was the cause of it? Why was it there? Was it, indeed, only a shadow? Was not it, perhaps, the saint who had left his window, or the angel who had formerly loved Saint Cecilia, and who had now come to love her in her turn? Although she was not vain, these thoughts made her proud, and were as sweet to her as an invisible caress. Then she grew impatient to know more, and her watching recommenced.

The moon, at its full, lighted up the Clos-Marie. When it was at its zenith, the trees, under the white rays which fell straight upon them in perpendicular lines, cast no more shadows, but were like running fountains of silent brightness. The whole garden was bathed and filled with a luminous wave as limpid as crystal, and the brilliancy of it was so penetrating that everything was clearly seen, even to the fine cutting of the willow-leaves. The slightest possible trembling of air seemed to wrinkle this lake of rays, sleeping in the

universal peace among the great elm-trees of the neighbouring garden and the gigantic brow of the Cathedral.

Two more evenings had passed like this, when, on the third night, as Angelique was leaning on her elbows and looking out, her heart seemed to receive a sudden shock. There, in the clear light, she saw him standing before her and looking at her. His shadow, like that of the trees, had disappeared under his feet, and he alone was there, distinctly seen. At this distance she saw—as if it were full day—that he was tall, slight, a blonde, and apparently about twenty years of age. He resembled either a Saint George or a superb picture of Christ, with his curly hair, his thin beard, his straight nose, rather large, and his proudly-smiling black eyes. And she recognised him perfectly ; never had she seen another like him ; it was he, her hero, and he was exactly as she expected to find him. The wonder was at last accomplished ; the slow creation of the invisible had perfected itself in this living apparition, and he came out from the unknown, from the movement of things, from murmuring voices, from the action of the night, from all that had enveloped her, until she almost fainted into unconsciousness. She also saw him as if he were lifted above the earth, so supernatural appeared to be his coming, whilst the miraculous seemed to surround him on every side as it floated over the mysterious moon-lake. He had as his escort the entire people of the Legend—the saints whose staffs blossomed, the virgins whose wounds shed milk—and the stars seemed to pale before this white group of perfection.

Angelique continued to look at him. He raised his arms, and held them out, wide open. She was not at all afraid, but smiled sweetly.

CHAPTER VI

It was a great affair for the whole household when, every three months, Hubertine prepared the 'lye' for the wash. A woman was hired to aid them, the Mother Gabet, as she was called, and for four days all embroidery was laid aside, while Angelique took her part in the unusual work, making of it a perfect amusement, as she soaped and rinsed the clothes in the clean water of the Chevrotte. The linen when taken from the ashes was wheeled to the Clos-Marie, through the little gate of communication in the garden. There the days were spent in the open air and the sunshine.

'I will do the washing this time, mother, for it is the greatest of delights to me.'

And gaily laughing, with her sleeves drawn up above her elbows, flourishing the beetle, Angelique struck the clothes most heartily in the pleasure of such healthy exercise. It was hard work, but she thoroughly enjoyed it, and only stopped occasionally to say a few words or to show her shiny face covered with foam.

'Look, mother! This makes my arms strong. It does me a world of good.'

The Chevrotte crossed the field diagonally, at first drowsily, then its stream became very rapid as it was

thrown in great bubbles over a pebbly descent. It came from the garden of the Bishop, through a species of floodgate left at the foot of the wall, and at the other end it disappeared under an arched vault at the corner of the Hôtel Voincourt, where it was swallowed up in the earth, to reappear two hundred yards farther on, as it passed along the whole length of the Rue Basse to the Ligneul, into which it emptied itself. Therefore it was very necessary to watch the linen constantly, for, run as fast as possible, every piece that was once let go was almost inevitably lost.

‘Mother, wait, wait a little! I will put this heavy stone on the napkins. We shall then see if the river can carry them away. The little thief!’

She placed the stone firmly, then returned to draw another from the old, tumble-down mill, enchanted to move about and to fatigue herself; and, although she severely bruised her finger, she merely moistened it a little, saying, ‘Oh! that is nothing.’

During the day the poor people who sheltered themselves in the ruins went out to ask for charity from the passers-by on the highways. So the Clos was quite deserted. It was a delicious, fresh solitude, with its clusters of pale-green willows, its high poplar-trees, and especially its verdure, its overflowing of deep-rooted wild herbs and grasses, so high that they came up to one’s shoulders. A quivering silence came from the two neighbouring parks, whose great trees barred the horizon. After three o’clock in the afternoon the shadow of the Cathedral was lengthened out with a calm sweetness and a perfume of evaporated incense.

Angelique continued to beat the linen harder still, with all the force of her well-shaped white arms.

‘Oh, mother dear! You can have no idea how hungry I shall be this evening! . . . Ah! you know that you have promised to give me a good strawberry-cake.’

On the day of the rinsing, Angelique was quite alone. The *mère* Gabet, suffering from a sudden, severe attack of sciatica, had not been able to come as usual, and Hubertine was kept at home by other household cares.

Kneeling in her little box half filled with straw, the young girl took the pieces one by one, shook them for a long time in the swiftly-rolling stream, until the water was no longer dimmed, but had become as clear as crystal. She did not hurry at all, for since the morning she had been tormented by a great curiosity, having seen, to her astonishment, an old workman in a white blouse, who was putting up a light scaffolding before the window of the Chapel Hauteceur. Could it be that they were about to repair the stained-glass panes? There was, it must be confessed, great need of doing so. Several pieces were wanting in the figure of Saint George, and in other places, where in the course of centuries panes that had been broken had been replaced by ordinary glass. Still, all this was irritating to her. She was so accustomed to the gaps of the saint who was piercing the dragon with his sword, and of the royal princess as she led the conquered beast along with her scarf, that she already mourned as if one had the intention of mutilating them. It was sacrilege to think of changing such old, venerable things. But when she returned to the field after her lunch, all her angry feelings passed away immediately; for a second workman was upon the staging, a young man this time, who

also wore a white blouse. And she had recognised him ! It was he ! Her hero !

Gaily, without any embarrassment, Angelique resumed her place on her knees on the straw of her box. Then, with her wrists bare, she put her hands in the deep, clear water, and recommenced shaking the linen back and forth.

Yes, it was he—tall, slight, a blonde, with his fine beard and his hair curled like that of a god, his complexion as fresh as when she had first seen him under the white shadow of the moonlight. Since it was he, there was nothing to be feared for the window ; were he to touch it, he would only embellish it. And it was no disappointment to her whatever to find him in this blouse, a workman like herself, a painter on glass, no doubt. On the contrary, this fact made her smile, so absolutely certain was she of the eventual fulfilment of her dream of royal fortune. Now, it was simply an appearance, a beginning. What good would it do her to know who he was, from whence he came, or whither he was going ? Some morning he would prove to be that which she expected him to be. A shower of gold would stream from the roof of the Cathedral, a triumphal march would break forth in the distant rumblings of the organ, and all would come true. She did not stay to ask herself how he could always be there, day and night. Yet it was evident either that he must live in one of the neighbouring houses, or he must pass by the lane des Guerdaches, which ran by the side of the Bishop's park to the Rue Magloire.

Then a charming hour passed by. She bent forward, she rinsed her linen, her face almost touching the fresh water ; but each time she took a different piece

she raised her head, and cast towards the church a look, in which, from the agitation of her heart, was a little good-natured malice. And he, upon the scaffolding, with an air of being closely occupied in examining the state of the window, turned towards her, glancing at her sideways, and evidently much disturbed whenever she surprised him doing so. It was astonishing how quickly he blushed, how dark red his face became. At the slightest emotion, whether of anger or interest, all the blood in his veins seemed to mount to his face. He had flashing eyes, which showed will; yet he was so diffident, that, when he knew he was being criticised, he was embarrassed as a little child, did not seem to know what to do with his hands, and stammered out his orders to the old man who accompanied him.

As for Angelique, that which delighted her most, as she refreshed her arms in this turbulent water, was to picture him innocent like herself, ignorant of the world, and with an equally intense desire to have a taste of life. There was no need of his telling to others who he was, for had not invisible messengers and unseen lips made known to her that he was to be her own? She looked once more, just as he was turning his head; and so the minutes passed, and it was delicious.

Suddenly she saw that he jumped from the staging, then that he walked backwards quite a distance through the grass, as if to take a certain position from which he could examine the window more easily. But she could not help smiling, so evident was it that he simply wished to approach her. He had made a firm decision, like a man who risks everything, and now it was touching as well as comical to see that he remained standing a few steps from her, his back towards her, not daring

to move, fearing that he had been too hasty in coming so far as he had done. For a moment she thought he would go back again to the chapel-window as he had come from it, without paying any attention to her. However, becoming desperate, at last he turned, and as at that moment she was glancing in his direction, their eyes met, and they remained gazing fixedly at each other. They were both deeply confused; they lost their self-possession, and might never have been able to regain it, had not a dramatic incident aroused them.

‘Oh dear! Oh dear!’ exclaimed the young girl, in distress.

In her excitement, a dressing-sacque, which she had been rinsing unconsciously, had just escaped her, and the stream was fast bearing it away. Yet another minute and it would disappear round the corner of the wall of the Voincourt park, under the arched vault through which the Chevrotte passed.

There were several seconds of anxious waiting. He saw at once what had happened, and rushed forward. But the current, leaping over the pebbles, carried this sacque, which seemed possessed, as it went along, much more rapidly than he. He stooped, thinking he had caught it, but took up only a handful of soapy foam. Twice he failed. The third time he almost fell. Then, quite vexed, with a brave look as if doing something at the peril of his life, he went into the water, and seized the garment just as it was about being drawn under the ground.

Angelique, who until now had followed the rescue anxiously, quite upset, as if threatened by a great misfortune, was so relieved that she had an intense desire to laugh. This feeling was partly nervous, it is true,



but not entirely so. For was not this the adventure of which she had so often dreamed? This meeting on the border of a lake; the terrible danger from which she was to be saved by a young man, more beautiful than the day? Saint George, the tribune, the warrior! These were simply united in one, and he was this painter of stained glass, this young workman in his white blouse! When she saw him coming back, his feet wet through and through, as he held the dripping camisole awkwardly in his hand, realising the ridiculous side of the energy he had employed in saving it from the waves, she was obliged to bite her tongue to check the outburst of gaiety which seemed almost to choke her.

He forgot himself as he looked at her. She was like a most adorable child in this restrained mirth with which all her youth seemed to vibrate. Splashed with water, her arms almost chilled by the stream, she seemed to send forth from herself the purity and clearness of these living springs which rushed from the mossy woods. She was an impersonation of health, joy, and freshness, in the full sunlight. One could easily fancy that she might be a careful housekeeper and a queen withal as she was there, in her working dress, with her slender waist, her regal neck, her oval face, such as one reads of in fairy-tales. And he did not know how to give her back the linen, he found her so exquisite, so perfect a representation of the beauty of the art he loved. It enraged him, in spite of himself, that he should have the air of an idiot, as he plainly saw the effort she made not to laugh. But he was forced to do something, so at last he gave her back the sacque.

Then Angelique realised that if she were to open her mouth and try to thank him, she would shout. Poor fellow! she sympathised with him and pitied him. But it was irresistible; she was happy, and needed to give expression to it; she must yield to the gaiety with which her heart overflowed. It was such lovely weather, and all life was so beautiful!

At last she thought she might speak, wishing simply to say: 'Thank you, Monsieur.'

But the wish to laugh had returned, and made her stammer, interrupting her at each word. It was a loud, cheery laugh, a sonorous outpouring of pearly notes, which sang sweetly to the crystalline accompaniment of the Chevrotte.

The young man was so disconcerted that he could find nothing to say. His usually pale face had become very red, the timid, childlike expression of his eyes had changed into a fiery one, like that of an eagle, and he moved away quickly. He disappeared with the old workman, and even then she continued to laugh as she bent over the water, again splashing herself as she shook the clothes hither and thither, rejoicing in the brightness of the happy day.

On the morrow he came an hour earlier. But at five o'clock in the morning the linen, which had been dripping all night, was spread out on the grass. There was a brisk wind, which was excellent for drying. But in order that the different articles need not be blown away, they were kept in place by putting little pebbles on their four corners. The whole wash was there, looking of a dazzling whiteness among the green herbage, having a strong odour of plants about it, and making the meadow as if it had suddenly blossomed out into a snowy covering of daisies.

When Angelique came to look at it after breakfast, she was distressed, for so strong had become the gusts of wind that all threatened to be carried away. Already a sheet had started, and several napkins had gone to fasten themselves to the branches of a willow. She fortunately caught them, but then the handkerchiefs began to fly. There was no one to help her; she was so frightened that she lost all her presence of mind. When she tried to spread out the sheet again, she had a regular battle, for she was quite lost in it, as it covered her with a great crackling sound.

Through all the noise of the wind she heard a voice saying, 'Mademoiselle, do you wish me to help you?'

It was he, and immediately she cried to him, with no other thought than her pre-occupation as a good housewife:

'Of course I wish it. Come and help me, then. Take the end over there, nearest to you. Hold it firm!'

The sheet, which they stretched out with their strong arms, flapped backwards and forwards like a sail. At last they succeeded in putting it on the ground, and then placed upon it much heavier stones than before. And now that, quite conquered, it sank quietly down, neither of them thought of leaving their places, but remained on their knees at the opposite corners, separated by this great piece of pure white linen.

She smiled, but this time without malice. It was a silent message of thanks. He became by degrees a little bolder.

'My name is Felicien.'

'And mine is Angelique.'

‘I am a painter on glass, and have been charged to repair the stained-glass window of the chapel here.’

‘I live over there with my father and mother, and I am an embroiderer of church vestments.’

The wind, which continued to be strong under the clear blue sky, carried away their words, lashed them with its purifying breath in the midst of the warm sunshine in which they were bathed.

They spoke of things which they already knew, as if simply for the pleasure of talking.

‘Is the window, then, to be replaced?’

‘No! oh no! it will be so well repaired that the new part cannot be distinguished from the old. I love it quite as much as you do.’

‘Oh! it is indeed true that I love it! I have already embroidered a Saint George, but it was not so beautiful as this one.’

‘Oh, not so beautiful! How can you say that? I have seen it, if it is the Saint George on the chasuble which the Abbot Cornille wore last Sunday. It is a marvellous thing.’

She blushed with pleasure, but quickly turned the conversation, as she exclaimed:

‘Hurry and put another stone on the left corner of the sheet, or the wind will carry it away from us again.’

He made all possible haste, weighed down the linen, which had been in great commotion, like the wings of a great wounded bird trying its best to fly away. Finding that this time it would probably keep its place, the two young people rose up, and now Angelique went through the narrow, green paths between the pieces of linen, glancing at each one, while he followed her with

an equally busy look, as if preoccupied by the possible loss of a dish-towel or an apron. All this seemed quite natural to them both. So she continued to chatter away freely and artlessly, as she told of her daily life and explained her tastes.

‘For my part, I always wish that everything should be in its place. . . . In the morning I am always awakened at the same hour by the striking of the cuckoo-clock in the workroom; and whether it is scarcely daylight or not, I dress myself as quickly as possible; my shoes and stockings are here, my soap and all articles of toilette there—a true mania for order. Yet you may well believe that I was not born so! Oh no! On the contrary, I was the most careless person possible. Mother was obliged to repeat to me the same words over and over again, that I might not leave my things in every corner of the house, for I found it easier to scatter them about. And now, when I am at work from morning to evening, I can never do anything right if my chair is not in the same place, directly opposite the light. Fortunately, I am neither right nor left handed, but can use both hands equally well at embroidering, which is a great help to me, for it is not everyone who can do that. . . . Then, I adore flowers, but I cannot keep a bouquet near me without having a terrible headache. Violets alone I can bear, and that is surprising. But their odour seems to calm me, and at the least indisposition I have only need to smell them and I am at once cured.’

He was enraptured while listening to her prattle. He revelled in the beautiful ring of her voice, which had an extremely penetrating, prolonged charm; and he must have been peculiarly sensitive to this human

music, for the caressing inflection on certain words moistened his eyelids.

Suddenly returning to her household cares she exclaimed :

‘Oh, now the shirts will soon be dry!’

Then, in the unconscious and simple need of making herself known, she continued her confidences :

‘For colouring, the white is always beautiful, is it not? I tire at times of blue, of red, and of all other shades; but white is a constant joy, of which I am never weary. There is nothing in it to trouble you; on the contrary, you would like to lose yourself in it. We had a white cat, with yellow spots, which I painted white. It did very well for a while, but it did not last long. Listen a minute. Mother does not know it, but I keep all the waste bits of white silk, and have a drawer full of them, for just nothing except the pleasure of looking at them, and smoothing them over from time to time. And I have another secret, but this is a very serious one! When I wake up, there is every morning near my bed a great, white object, which gently flies away.’

He did not smile, but appeared firmly to believe her. Was not all she said, in her simple way, quite natural? A queen in the magnificence of her courtly surroundings could not have conquered him so quickly. She had, in the midst of this white linen on the green grass, a charming, grand air, happy and supreme, which touched him to the heart, with an ever-increasing power. He was completely subdued. She was everything to him from this moment. He would follow her to the last day of his life, in the worship of her light feet, her delicate hands, of her whole being, adorable

and perfect as a dream. She continued to walk before him, with a short, quick step, and he followed her closely, suffocated by a thought of the happiness he scarcely dared hope might come to him.

But another sudden gust of wind came up, and there was a perfect flight into the distance of cambric collars and cuffs, of neckerchiefs and chemisettes of muslin, which, as they disappeared, seemed like a flock of white birds knocked about by the tempest.

Angelique began to run.

'Oh dear! what shall I do? You will have to come again and help me. Oh dear!'

They both rushed forward. She caught a kerchief on the borders of the Chevrotte. He had already saved two chemisettes which he found in the midst of some high thistles. One by one the cuffs and the collars were retaken. But in the course of their running at full speed, the flying folds of her skirt had at several different times brushed against him, and each time his face became suddenly red, and his heart beat violently. In his turn, he touched her face accidentally, as he jumped to recover the last fichu, which he had carelessly let go of. She was startled and stood quietly, but breathing more quickly. She joked no longer; her laugh sounded less clear, and she was not tempted to ridicule this great, awkward, but most attractive fellow. The feminine nature so recently awakened in her softened her almost to tears, and with the feeling of inexplicable tenderness, which overpowered her, was mingled a half-fear.

What was the matter with her that she was less gay, and that she was so overcome by this delicious pang? When he held out the kerchief to her, their hands, by

chance, touched for a moment. They trembled, as they looked at each other inquiringly. Then she drew back quickly, and for several seconds seemed not to know what she should do under the extraordinary circumstances which had just occurred. At last she started. Gathering up all the smaller articles of linen in her arms, and leaving the rest, she turned towards her home.

Felicien then wished to speak . . . ‘Oh, I beg your pardon. . . . I pray you to——’

But the wind, which had greatly increased, cut off his words. In despair he looked at her as she flew along, as if carried away by the blast. She ran and ran, in and out, among the white sheets and tablecloths, under the oblique, pale golden rays of the sun. Already the shadow of the Cathedral seemed to envelop her, and she was on the point of entering her own garden by the little gate which separated it from the Clos, without having once glanced behind her. But on the threshold she turned quickly, as if seized with a kind impulse, not wishing that he should think she was angry, and confused, but smiling, she called out :

‘Thank you. Thank you very much.’

Did she wish to say that she was grateful to him for having helped her in recovering the linen ? Or was it for something else ? She disappeared, and the gate was shut after her.

And he remained alone in the midst of the field, under the great regular gusts, which continued to rage, although the sky was still clear and pure. The elms in the Bishop’s garden rustled with a long, billowy sound, and a loud voice seemed to clamour through the terraces and the flying buttresses of the Cathedral. But he heard

only the light flapping of a little morning cap, tied to a branch of a lilac bush, as if it were a bouquet, and which belonged to her.

From that date, each time that Angelique opened her window she saw Felicien over there in the Clos-Marie. He passed days in the field, having the chapel window as an excuse for doing so, on which, however, the work did not advance the least in the world. For hours he would forget himself behind a cluster of bushes, where, stretched out on the grass, he watched through the leaves. And it was the greatest of pleasures to smile at each other every morning and evening. She was so happy that she asked for nothing more. There would not be another general washing for three months, so, until then, the little garden-gate would seldom be open. But three months would pass very quickly, and if they could see each other daily, was not that bliss enough? What, indeed, could be more charming than to live in this way, thinking during the day of the evening look, and during the night of the glance of the early morrow? She existed only in the hope of that desired moment; its joy filled her life. Moreover, what good would there be in approaching each other and in talking together? Were they not constantly becoming better acquainted without meeting? Although at a distance, they understood each other perfectly; each penetrated into the other's innermost thoughts with the closest intimacy. At last, they became so filled one with the other that they could not close their eyes without seeing before them, with an astonishing clearness of detail, the image of their new friend; so, in reality, they were never separated.

It was a constant surprise to Angelique that she

had unbosomed herself at once to Felicien. At their first meeting she had confided in him, had told him everything about her habits, her tastes, and the deepest secrets of her heart. He, more silent, was called Felicien, and that was all she knew. Perhaps it was quite right that it should be so; the woman giving everything, and the man holding himself back as a stranger. She had no premature curiosity. She continued to smile at the thought of things which would certainly be realised. So for her, that of which she was ignorant counted for nothing. The only important fact in her mind was the intimacy between them, which united them, little by little, apart from the world. She knew nothing about him, yet she was so well acquainted with his nature that she could read his thoughts in a simple look or smile. He, her hero, had come as she always said he would. She had at once recognised him, and they loved each other.

So they enjoyed most thoroughly this true possession from a distance. They were certainly encouraged by the new discoveries they made. She had long, slender hands, roughened a little at the ends of the fingers by her constant use of the needle, but he adored them. She noticed that his feet were small, and was proud of the fact. Everything about him flattered her; she was grateful to him for being so handsome; and she was overcome with joy the evening that she found his beard to be of a lighter shade than his hair, which fact gave a greater softness to his smile. He went away transported when, one morning, as she leaned over the balcony, he saw a little red spot on her pretty neck. Their hearts being thus laid open, new treasures were daily found. Certainly the proud and frank manner in which

she opened her window showed that, even in her ignorance as a little embroiderer, she had the royal bearing of a princess. In the same way she knew that he was good, from seeing how lightly he walked over the herbs and the grass. Around them was a radiance of virtues and graces from the first hour of their meeting. Each interview had its special charm. It seemed to them as if their felicity in seeing each other could never be exhausted.

Nevertheless, Felicien soon showed certain signs of impatience, and he no longer remained for hours concealed behind a bush in the immobility of an absolute happiness. As soon as Angelique appeared at her window, he was restless, and tried to approach her as he glided from willow to willow. At length she was a little disturbed, fearing that someone might see him. One day there was almost a quarrel, for he came even to the wall of the house, so she was obliged to leave the balcony. It was a great shock to him that she should be offended, and he showed in the expression of his face so mute a prayer of submission that the next day she pardoned him, and opened her window at the usual hour.

But although expectation was delightful, it was not sufficient for him, and he began again. Now he seemed to be everywhere at once: he filled the Clos-Marie with his restlessness; he came out from behind every tree; he appeared above every bunch of brambles. Like the wood-pigeons of the great elms in the Bishop's garden, he seemed to have his habitation between two branches in the environs. The Chevrotte was an excuse for his passing entire days there, on its willowy banks, bending over the stream, in which he seemed to be watching the floating of the clouds.

One day she saw that he had climbed up on the ruins of the old mill, and was standing on the framework of a shed, looking happy to have thus approached her a little, in his regret at not being able to fly even so far as her shoulder.

Another day she stifled a slight scream as she saw him far above her, leaning on an ornamented balustrade of the Cathedral, on the roof of the chapels of the choir, which formed a terrace. In what way could he have reached this gallery, the door of which was always fastened, and whose key no one had a right to touch but the beadle? Then again, a little later on, how was it that she should find him up in the air among the flying buttresses of the nave and the pinnacles of the piers? From these heights he could look into every part of her chamber, as the swallows who, flying from point to point among the spires, saw everything that was therein, without her having the idea of hiding herself from them. But a human eye was different, and from that day she shut herself up more, and an ever-increasing trouble came to her at the thought that her privacy was being intruded upon, and that she was no longer alone in the atmosphere of adoration that surrounded her. If she were really not impatient, why was it that her heart beat so strongly, like the bell of the clock-tower on great festivals?

Three days passed without Angelique showing herself, so alarmed was she by the increasing boldness of Felicien. She vowed in her mind that she would never see him again, and wound herself up to such a degree of resentment, that she thought she hated him. But he had given her his feverishness. She could not keep still, and the slightest pretext was enough for an

excuse to leave the chasuble upon which she was at work.

So, having heard that the *mère* Gabet was ill in bed, in the most profound poverty, she went to see her every morning. Her room was on the Rue des Orfèvres, only three doors away from the Huberts. She would take her tea, sugar, and soup, then, when necessary, go to buy her medicine at the druggist's on the Grand Rue. One day, as she returned with her hands full of little phials, she started at seeing Felicien at the bedside of the old sick woman. He turned very red, and slipped away awkwardly, after leaving a charitable offering. The next day he came in as she was leaving, and she gave him her place, very much displeased. Did he really intend to prevent her from visiting the poor?

In fact, she had been taken with one of her fits of charity, which made her give all she owned that she might overwhelm those who had nothing. At the idea of suffering, her whole soul melted into a pitiful fraternity. She went often to the *père* Mascart's, a blind paralytic on the Rue Basse, whom she was obliged to feed herself with the broth she carried him; then to the Chouteaux, a man and his wife, each one over ninety years of age, who lived in a little hut on the Rue Magloire, which she had furnished for them with articles taken from the attic of her parents. Then there were others and others still whom she saw among the wretched populace of the quarter, and whom she helped to support from things that were about her, happy in being able to surprise them and to see them brighten up for a little while. But now, strange to say, wherever she went she encountered Felicien! Never before had she seen so much of him; she who had avoided going to

her window for fear that he might be near. Her trouble increased, and at last she was very angry.

But the worst of all in this matter was that Angelique soon despaired of her charity. This young man spoilt all her pleasure of giving. In other days he might perhaps have been equally generous, but it was not among the same people, not her own particular poor, of that she was sure. And he must have watched her and followed her very closely to know them all and to take them so regularly one after the other.

Now, go when she might with a little basket of provisions to the Chouteaux, there was always money on the table. One day, when she hurried to *père* Mascart, who was constantly complaining that he had no tobacco, she found him very rich, with a shining new louis d'or on his table. Strangest of all, once when visiting *mère* Gabet, the latter gave her a hundred franc note to change, and with it she was enabled to buy some high-priced medicines, of which the poor woman had long been in need, but which she never hoped to obtain, for where could she find money to pay for them?

Angelique herself could not distribute much money, as she had none. It was heart-breaking to her to realise her powerlessness, when he could so easily empty his purse. She was, of course, happy that such a wind-fall had come to the poor, but she felt as if she were greatly diminished in her former self-estimation. She no longer had the same happiness in giving, but was disturbed and sad that she had so little to distribute, while he had so much.

The young man, not understanding her feelings, thinking to conquer her esteem by an increase of gift,

redoubled his charity, and thus daily made hers seem less.

Was not it exasperating to run against this fellow everywhere; to see him give an ox wherever she offered an egg? In addition to all this, she was obliged to hear his praises sung by all the needy whom he visited: 'A young man so good, so kind, and so well brought up.' She was a mere nothing now. They talked only of him, spreading out his gifts as if to shame hers. Notwithstanding her firm determination to forget him, she could not refrain from questioning them about him. What had he left? What had he said? He was very handsome, was he not? Tender and diffident as a woman! Perhaps he might even have spoken of her! Ah, yes indeed! That was true, for he always talked of her. Then she was very angry; yes, she certainly hated him, for at last she realised that he weighed on her breast too heavily.

But matters could not continue in this way for ever, a change must take place; and one May evening, at a wondrously beautiful nightfall, it came. It was at the home of the Lemballeuse, the family who lived in the ruins of the mill. There were only women there; the old grandmother, seamed with wrinkles but still active, her daughter, and her grandchildren. Of the latter, Tiennette, the elder, was a large, wild-looking girl, twenty years of age, and her two little sisters, Rose and Jeanne, had already bold, fearless eyes, under their unkempt mops of red hair. They all begged during the day on the highway and along the moat, coming back at night, their feet worn out from fatigue in their old shoes fastened with bits of string. Indeed, that very evening Tiennette had been obliged to leave hers among

the stones, and had returned wounded and with bleeding ankles. Seated before their door, in the midst of the high grass of the Clos-Marie, she drew out the thorns from her flesh, whilst her mother and the two children surrounded her and uttered lamentations.

Just then Angelique arrived, hiding under her apron the bread which she had brought them, as she did once every week. She had entered the field by the little garden-gate, which she had left open behind her, as she intended to go back as quickly as possible. But she stopped on seeing all the family in tears.

‘What is the matter? Why are you in such distress?’

‘Ah, my good lady!’ whined the mother Lemballeuse, ‘do not you see in what a terrible state this great foolish girl has put herself? To-morrow she will not be able to walk, so that will be a whole day lost. She must have some shoes!’

Rose and Jeanne, with their eyes snapping from under their tangled hair, redoubled their sobs, as they cried out loudly—

‘Yes, yes! she must have some shoes! She must have some shoes!’

Tiennette, half lifting up her thin, dark face, looked round furtively. Then, fiercely, without a word, she made one of her feet bleed still more, maddened over a long splinter which she had just drawn out by the aid of a pin, and which must have pained her intensely.

Angelique, quite touched by the scene, offered her gift.

‘See! here at least is some bread.’

‘Oh, bread!’ said the mother. ‘No doubt it is necessary to eat. But it is not with bread that she will

be able to walk again, of that I am certain! And we were to go to the fair at Bligny, a fair where, every year, she makes at least two francs. Oh, good heavens! What will become of us if she cannot go there?’

Pity and embarrassment rendered Angelique mute. She had exactly five sous in her pocket. It surely was not with five sous that one could buy a pair of shoes, even at an auction sale. As it had often done before, her want of money now paralysed her. And that which exasperated her still more and made her lose her self-control was that at this moment, as she looked behind her, she saw Felicien, standing a few feet from her in the darkening shadow. Without doubt he had heard all that had been said; perhaps even he had been there for a great while, for he always appeared to her in this way when least expected without her ever knowing whence he came or whither he was going.

She thought to herself, ‘He will give the shoes.’

Indeed, he had already come forward. The first stars were appearing in the pale sky. A sweet, gentle quiet seemed to fall down from on high, soothing to sleep the Clos-Marie, whose willows were lost in the dusk. The Cathedral itself was only a great black bar in the West.

‘Yes, certainly, now he will offer to give the shoes.’

And at this probability she was really quite discouraged. Was he always, then, to give everything? Could she never, even once, conquer him? Never! Her heart beat so rapidly that it pained her. She wished that she might be very rich, to show him that she, too, could make others happy.

But the Lemballeuse had seen the good gentleman. The mother had rushed forward; the two little sisters

moaned as they held out their hands for alms, whilst the elder one, letting go of her wounded ankles, looked at the new-comer inquiringly with her wild eyes.

‘Listen, my noisy children,’ said Felicien. Then, addressing the mother, he continued, ‘You may go to the Grand Rue, at the corner of the Rue Basse——’

Angelique had understood immediately, for the shoemaker had his shop there. She interrupted him quickly, and was so agitated that she stammered her words at random.

‘But that is a useless thing to do! What would be the good of it? It is much more simple——’

Yet she could not find in her own mind the more simple thing she desired. What could she do? What could she invent, so to be before him in giving her charity? Never had it seemed to her possible she could detest him as she did now.

‘You will say from me, that it is I who have sent you,’ continued Felicien. ‘You will ask——’

Again she interrupted him. The contest lasted a moment longer. She repeated in an anxious way:

‘It is, indeed, much more simple; it is much easier——’

Suddenly she was calm. She seated herself upon a stone, thoughtfully examined her shoes, took them off, and then drew off her stockings, saying:

‘Look! This is the best thing to do, after all! Why should you have any trouble about the matter?’

‘Oh, my good young lady! God will reward you!’ exclaimed the mother Lemballeuse, as she turned over the shoes and found they were not only excellent and strong, but almost new. ‘I will cut them a trifle on

the top, to make them a little larger—— Tiennette, why do you not thank her, stupid creature?’

Tiennette snatched from the hands of Rose and Jeanne the stockings they were coveting. She did not open her lips; she only gave one long, fixed, hard look.

But now Angelique realised that her feet were bare, and that Felicien saw them. She blushed deeply, and knew not what to do. She dared not move, for, were she to rise to get up, he would only see them all the more. Then, frightened, she rose quickly, and without realising what she was doing, began to run. In the grass her flying feet were very white and small. The darkness of the evening had increased, and the Clos-Marie was a lake of shadow between the great trees on one side and the Cathedral on the other. And on the ground the only visible light came from those same little feet, white and satiny as the wing of a dove.

Startled, and afraid of the water, Angelique followed the bank of the Chevrotte, that she might cross it on a plank which served as a bridge. But Felicien had gone a shorter way through the brambles and brushwood. Until now he had always been overcome by his timidity, and he had turned redder than she as he saw her bare feet, pure and chaste as herself. Now, in the overflow of his ignorant youth, passionately fond of beauty and desirous for love, he was impatient to cry out and tell her of the feeling which had entirely taken possession of him since he had first seen her. But yet, when she brushed by him in her flight, he could only stammer, with a trembling voice, the acknowledgment so long delayed and which burnt his lips:

‘I love you.’

She stopped in surprise. For an instant she stood still, and, slightly trembling, looked at him. Her anger and the hate she thought she had for him all vanished at once, and melted into a most delicious sentiment of astonishment. What had he said, what was the word he had just pronounced, that she should be so overcome by it? She knew that he loved her; yet when he said so, the sound of it in her ear overwhelmed her with an inexplicable joy. It resounded so deeply through her whole being, that her fears came back and were enlarged. She never would dare reply to him; it was really more than she could bear; she was oppressed.

He, grown more bold, his heart touched and drawn nearer to hers by their united deeds of charity, repeated:

‘I love you.’

And she, fearing the lover, began to run. That was surely the only way to escape such a danger; yet it was also a happiness, it was all so strange. The Chevrotte was gaily singing, and she plunged into it like a startled fawn. Among its pebbles her feet still ran on, under the chill of the icy water. The garden-gate was at last reached, it closed, and she disappeared.

CHAPTER VII

FOR two days Angelique was conscience-smitten. As soon as she was alone, she sobbed as if she had done something wrong. And this question, which she could not answer, came constantly to her mind: Had she sinned in listening to this young man? Was she lost, like the dreadful women in the Legend, who, having been tempted, had yielded to the Devil? Was life to-day as it was centuries ago? The words, so softly uttered, 'I love you,' still resounded with such a tumult in her ears, and she was confused, yet pleased by them to such a degree, that they must certainly have come from some terrible power hidden in the depth of the invisible. But she knew not—in fact, how could she have known anything in the ignorance and solitude in which she had grown up? Her anguish was redoubled by this mysterious and inexplicable struggle within her.

Had she sinned in making the acquaintance of Felicien, and then in keeping it a secret? She recalled to her mind, one by one, all the details of her daily experience during the past few weeks; she argued with her innocent scruples.

What was sin, in short? Was it simply to meet—to talk—and afterwards to tell a falsehood to one's

parents? But that could not be the extent of the evil. Then why was she so oppressed? Why, if not guilty, did she suddenly seem to have become quite another person—as agitated as if a new soul had been given her? Perhaps it was sin that had made her so weak and uncomfortable. Her heart was full of vague, undefined longings—so strange a medley of words, and also of acts, in the future, that she was frightened by them, without in the least understanding them. The blood mounted to her face, and exquisitely coloured her cheeks, as she heard again the sweet, yet appalling words, ‘I love you’; and she reasoned no longer, but sobbed again, doubting evident facts, fearing the commission of a fault in the beyond—in that which had neither name nor form.

But that which especially distressed her now was that she had not made a *confidante* of Hubertine. Could she only have asked her what she wished to know, no doubt the latter with a word would have explained the whole mystery to her. Then it seemed to her as if the mere fact of speaking to someone of her trouble would have cured her. But the secret had become too weighty; to reveal it would be more than she could bear, for the shame would be too great. She became quite artful for the moment, affected an air of calmness, when in the depths of her soul a tempest was raging. If asked why she was so pre-occupied, she lifted her eyes with a look of surprise as she replied that she was thinking of nothing. Seated before the working-frame, her hands mechanically drawing the needle back and forth, very quiet to all outward appearance, she was, from morning till evening, distracted by one thought. To be loved! to be loved! And for

herself, on her side, was she in love? This was still an obscure question, to which, in her inexperience, she found no answer. She repeated it so constantly that at last it made her giddy, the words lost all their usual meaning, and everything seemed to be in a whirl, which carried her away. With an effort she recovered herself, and realised that, with needle in hand, she was still embroidering with her accustomed application, although mechanically, as if in a half-dream. Perhaps these strange symptoms were a sign that she was about to have a severe illness. One evening she had such an attack of shivering when she went to bed that she thought she would never be able to recover from it. That idea was at the same time both cruel and sweet. She suffered from it as if it were too great a joy. Even the next day her heart beat as if it would break, and her ears were filled with a singing sound, like the ringing of a distant bell. What could it mean? Was she in love, or was she about to die? Thinking thus, she smiled sweetly at Hubertine, who, in the act of waxing her thread, was looking at her anxiously.

Moreover, Angelique had made a vow that she would never again see Felicien. She no longer ran the risk of meeting him among the brambles and wild grasses in the Clos-Marie, and she had even given up her daily visits to the poor. Her fear was intense lest, were they to find themselves face to face, something terrible might come to pass. In her resolution there was mingled, besides a feeling of penitence, a wish to punish herself for some fault she might unintentionally have committed. So, in her days of rigid humiliation, she condemned herself not even to glance once through the window, so sure was she of seeing on the banks of

the Chevrotte the one whom she dreaded. But, after awhile, being sorely tempted, she looked out, and if it chanced that he were not there, she was sad and low-spirited until the following day.

One morning, when Hubert was arranging a dalmatic, a ring at the door-bell obliged him to go downstairs. It must be a customer; no doubt an order for some article, as Hubertine and Angelique heard the hum of voices which came through the doorway at the head of the stairs, which remained open. Then they looked up in great astonishment; for steps were mounting, and the embroiderer was bringing someone with him to the workroom, a most unusual occurrence. And the young girl was quite overcome as she recognised Felicien. He was dressed simply, like a journeyman artist, whose hands are white. Since she no longer went to him he had come to her, after days of vain expectation and of anxious uncertainty, during which he had constantly said to himself that she did not yet love him, since she remained hidden from him.

‘Look, my dear child, here is something which will be of particular interest to you,’ explained Hubert. ‘Monsieur wishes to give orders for an exceptional piece of work. And, upon my word, that we might talk of it at our ease, I preferred that he should come up here at once. This is my daughter, sir, to whom you must show your drawing.’

Neither he nor Hubertine had the slightest suspicion that this was not the first time the young people had met. They approached them only from a sentiment of curiosity to see. But Felicien was, like Angelique, almost stifled with emotion and timidity. As he unrolled the design, his hands trembled, and he was

obliged to speak very slowly to hide the change in his voice.

‘It is to be a mitre for Monseigneur the Bishop. Yes, certain ladies in the city who wished to make him this present charged me with the drawing of the different parts, as well as with the superintendence of its execution. I am a painter of stained glass, but I also occupy myself a great deal with ancient art. You will see that I have simply reconstituted a Gothic mitre.’

Angelique bent over the great sheet of parchment which he had spread before her, and started slightly as she exclaimed :

‘Oh ! it is Saint Agnes.’

It was indeed the youthful martyr of but thirteen years of age ; the naked virgin clothed with her hair, that had grown so long only her little hands and feet were seen from under it, just as she was upon the pillar at one of the doors of the cathedral ; particularly, however, as one found her in the interior of the church, in an old wooden statue that formerly was painted, but was to-day a light fawn colour, all gilded by age. She occupied the entire front of the mitre, half floating, as she was carried towards heaven borne by the angels ; while below her, stretched out into the distance, was a fine delicate landscape. The other sides and the lap-pets were enriched with lance-shaped ornaments of an exquisite style.

‘These ladies,’ continued Felicien, ‘wish to make the present on the occasion of the Procession of the Miracle, and naturally I thought it my duty to choose Saint Agnes.’

‘The idea was a most excellent one,’ interposed Hubert.

And Hubertine added, in her turn :

‘ Monseigneur will be deeply gratified.’

The so-called Procession of the Miracle, which takes place each year on July 28, dates from the time of Jean V. d’Hauteceœur, who instituted it as a thanksgiving to God for the miraculous power He had given to him and to his race to save Beaumont from the plague. According to the legend, the Hauteceœurs are indebted for this remarkable gift to the intervention of Saint Agnes, of whom they were the greatest admirers ; and, since the most ancient time, it has been the custom on the anniversary of her fête to take down the old statue of the saint and carry it slowly in a solemn procession through the streets of the town, in the pious belief that she still continues to disperse and drive away all evils.

‘ Ah,’ at last murmured Angelique, her eyes on the design, ‘ the Procession of the Miracle. But that will come in a few days, and we shall not have time enough to finish it.’

The Huberts shook their heads. In truth, so delicate a piece of work required the most minute care and attention. Yet Hubertine turned towards her daughter as she said :

‘ I could help you, my dear. I might attend to the ornaments, and then you will only have the figure to do.’

Angelique continued to closely examine the figure of the saint, and was deeply troubled. She said to herself, ‘ No, no.’ She refused ; she would not give herself the pleasure of accepting. It would be inexcusable on her part thus to be an accomplice in a plan, for it was evident that Felicien was keeping something back.

She was perfectly sure that he was not poor, and that he wore a workman's dress simply as a disguise; and this affected simplicity, all this history, told only that he might approach her, put her on her guard, amused and happy though she was, in reality, transfiguring him, seeing in him the royal prince that he should be; so thoroughly did she live in the absolute certainty of the entire realisation of her dream, sooner or later.

'No,' she repeated, in a half-whisper, 'we should not have the needed time.'

And without lifting her eyes she continued, as if speaking to herself:

'For the saint, we could use neither the close embroidery nor the lace openwork. It would not be worthy her. It should be an embroidery in gold, shaded by silk.'

'Exactly,' said Felicien. 'That is what I had already thought of, for I knew that Mademoiselle had re-found the secret of making it. There is still quite a pretty little fragment of it at the sacristy.'

Hubert was quite excited.

'Yes, yes! it was made in the fifteenth century, and the work was done by one of my far-off ancestresses. . . . Shaded gold! Ah, Monsieur, there was never anything equal to that in the whole world. But, unfortunately, it took too much time, it cost altogether too dear, and, in addition, only a real artist ever succeeded in it. Think of it; it is more than two hundred years since anyone has ever attempted such embroidery. And if my daughter refuses, you will be obliged to give it up entirely, for she is the only person who is qualified to undertake it. I do not know of anyone else who has the delicacy of fingers and the clearness of eye necessary for it.'

Hubertine, who, since they had spoken of the style of the work, realised what a great undertaking it was, said, in a quiet, decided tone :

‘It would be utterly impossible to do it in a fortnight. It would need the patience and skill of a fairy to accomplish it.’

But Angelique, who had not ceased studying all the features of the beautiful martyr, had ended by making a discovery which delighted her beyond expression. Agnes resembled her. In designing from the old statue, Felicien certainly thought of her, and this idea—that she was in his mind, always present with him, that he saw her everywhere—softened her resolution to avoid him. At last she looked up; she noticed how eager he was, and his eyes glistened with so earnest a supplication that she was conquered. Still, with the intuitive half-malice, the love of tormenting, this natural science which comes to all young girls, even when they are entirely ignorant of life, she did not wish to have the appearance of yielding too readily.

‘It is impossible,’ she repeated. ‘I could not do it for anyone.’

Felicien was in despair. He was sure he understood the hidden meaning in her words. It was he whom she had refused, as well as the work. As he was about to go out of the room, he said to Hubert :

‘As for the pay, you could have asked any price you wished. These ladies gave me leave to offer as much as three thousand francs.’

The household of the Huberts was in no way a selfish one; yet so great a sum startled each member of it. The husband and wife looked at each other inquiringly. Was it not a pity to lose so advantageous an offer?

‘Three thousand francs,’ repeated Angelique, with her gentle voice; ‘did you say three thousand francs, Monsieur?’

And she, to whom money was nothing, since she had never known its value, kept back a smile, a mocking smile, which scarcely drew the corners of her mouth, rejoicing that she need not seem to yield to the pleasure of seeing him, and glad to give him a false opinion of herself.

‘Oh, Monsieur, if you can give three thousand francs for it, then I accept. I would not do it for everyone, but from the moment that one is willing to pay so well, why, that is different. If it is necessary, I can work on it at night, as well as during the day.’

Hubert and Hubertine then objected, wishing to refuse in their turn, for fear the fatigue might be too great for her.

‘No,’ she replied. ‘It is never wise to send away money that is brought to you. You can depend upon me, Monsieur. Your mitre will be ready the evening before the procession.’

Felicien left the design and bade them good-day, for he was greatly disappointed, and he had no longer the courage to give any new explanations in regard to the work, as an excuse for stopping longer. What would he gain by doing so? It was certainly true that she did not like him, for she had pretended not to recognise him, and had treated him as she would any ordinary customer, whose money alone is good to take. At first he was angry, as he accused her of being mean-spirited and grasping. So much the better! It was ended between them, this unspoken romance, and he would never think of her again. Then, as he always did

think of her, he at last excused her, for was she not dependent upon her work to live, and ought she not to gain her bread?

Two days later he was very unhappy, and he began to wander around the house, distressed that he could not see her. She no longer went out to walk, she did not even go to the balcony, or to the window, as before. He was forced to acknowledge that if she cared not for him, if in reality she was mercenary, in spite of all, his love for her increased daily, as one loves when only twenty years of age, without reasoning, following merely the drawing of one's heart, simply for the joy and the grief of loving.

One morning he caught a glimpse of her for a moment, and realised that he could not give her up. Now she was his chosen one and no other. Whatever she might be, bad or good, ugly or pretty, poor or rich, he would give up his life rather than not be able to claim her.

The third day his sufferings were so great that, notwithstanding all his wise resolves, he returned to the house of the embroiderers.

After having rung the bell, he was received as before, downstairs, by Hubert, who, on account of the want of clearness in his explanations in regard to his visit, concluded the best thing to be done was to allow him to go upstairs again.

‘My daughter, Monsieur, wishes to speak to you on certain points of the work that I do not quite understand.’

Then Felicien stammered, ‘If it would not disturb Mademoiselle too much, I would like to see how far—’ These ladies advised me to personally superintend the

work—that is, if by doing so I should not be in any one's way.'

Angelique's heart beat violently when she saw him come in. She almost choked, but, making a great effort, she controlled herself. The blood did not even mount her cheeks, and with an appearance of calm indifference, she replied :

'Oh, nothing ever disturbs me, Monsieur. I can work equally well before anyone. As the design is yours, it is quite natural that you should wish to follow the execution of it.'

Quite discountenanced by this reception, Felicien would not have dared to have taken a seat, had not Hubertine welcomed him cordially, as she smiled in her sweet, quiet way at this excellent customer. Almost immediately she resumed her work, bending over the frame where she was embroidering on the sides of the mitre the Gothic ornaments in guipure, or open lace-work.

On his side, Hubert had just taken down from the wall a banner which was finished, had been stiffened, and for two days past had been hung up to dry, and which now he wished to relax. No one spoke; the three workers kept at their tasks as if no other person had been in the room with them.

In the midst of this charming quiet, the young man little by little grew calmer. When the clock struck three, the shadow of the Cathedral was already very long, and a delicate half-light entered by the window, which was wide open. It was almost like the twilight hour, which commenced early in the afternoon for this little house, so fresh and green from all the verdure that was about it, as it stood by the side of the colossal

church. A slight sound of steps was heard on the pavement outside ; it was a school of young girls being taken to Confession.

In the workroom, the tools, the time-stained walls, everything which remained there immovable, seemed to sleep in the repose of centuries, and from every corner came freshness and rest. A great square of white light, smooth and pure, fell upon the frame over which Hubertine and Angelique were bending, with their delicate profiles in the fawn-coloured reflection of the gold.

‘Mademoiselle,’ began Felicien, feeling very awkward, as he realised that he must give some reason for his visit—‘I wish to say, Mademoiselle, that for the hair it seems to me it would be better to employ gold rather than silk.’

She raised her head, and the laughing expression of her eyes clearly signified that he need not have taken the trouble of coming if he had no other recommendation to make. And she looked down again as she replied, in a half-mocking tone :

‘There is no doubt about that, Monsieur.’

He was indeed ridiculous, for he remarked then for the first time that it was exactly what she was doing. Before her was the design he had made, but tinted with water-colours, touched up with gold, with all the delicacy of an old miniature, a little softened, like what one sees in some prayer books of the fifteenth century. And she copied this image with the patience and the skill of an artist working with a magnifying glass. After having reproduced it with rather heavy strokes upon the white silk, tightly stretched and lined with heavy linen, she covered this silk with threads of gold

carried from the bottom to the top, fastened simply at the two ends, so that they were left free and close to each other. When using these same threads as a woof, she separated them with the point of her needle to find the design below. She followed this same drawing, recovered the gold threads with stitches of silk across, which she assorted according to the colours of the model. In the shaded parts the silk completely hid the gold; in the half-lights the stitches of silk were farther and farther apart, while the real lights were made by gold alone, entirely uncovered. It was thus the shaded gold, that most beautiful of all work, the foundation being modified by the silks, making a picture of mellow colours as if warmed from beneath by a glory and a mystic light.

‘Oh!’ suddenly said Hubert, who began to stretch out the banner by separating with his fingers the cords of the trellis, ‘the masterpiece of a woman who embroidered in the olden time was always in this difficult work. To become a member of the Corporation she had to make, as it is written in the statutes, a figure by itself in shaded gold, a sixth part as tall as if life-size. You would have been received, my Angelique.’

Again there was an unbroken silence. Felicien watched her constantly, as she stooped forward, absorbed in her task, quite as if she were entirely alone. For the hair of the saint, contrary to the general rule, she had had the same idea as he; that was, to use no silk, but to re-cover gold with gold, and she kept ten needles at work with this brilliant thread of all shades, from the dark red of dying embers, to the pale, delicate yellow tint of the leaves of the forest trees in the autumn. Agnes was thus covered from her neck to her

ankles with a stream of golden hair. It began at the back of her head, covered her body with a thick mantle, flowed in front of her from the shoulders in two waves which united under the chin, and fell down to her feet in one wavy sheet. It was, indeed, the miraculous hair, a fabulous fleece, with heavy twists and curls, a glorious, starry efflorescence, the warm and living robe of the saint, perfumed with its pure nudity.

That day Felicien could do nothing but watch Angelique as she embroidered the curls, following the exact direction of their rolling with her little pointed stitches, and he never wearied of seeing the hair grow and radiate under her magic needle. Its weight, and the great quivering with which it seemed to be unrolled at one turn, disturbed him.

Hubertine, occupied in sewing on spangles, hiding the thread with which each one was attached with a tiny round of gold twist, lifted up her head from time to time and gave him a calm motherly look, whenever she was obliged to throw into the waste-basket a spangle that was not well made.

Hubert, who had just taken away the side pieces of wood, that he might unstitch the banner from the frame, was about folding it up carefully. And at last, Felicien, whose embarrassment was greatly increased by this unbroken silence, realised that it was best for him to take leave, since as yet he had not been able to think of any of the suggestions which he had said he intended to make.

He rose, blushed, and stammered:

‘I will return another day. I find that I have so badly succeeded in reproducing the charming design of

the head of the saint that you may perhaps have need of some explanations from me.'

Angelique looked him fully in the face with her sweet, great eyes.

'Oh, no, not at all. But come again, Monsieur. Do not hesitate to do so, if you are in the least anxious about the execution of the work.'

He went away, happy from the permission given him, but chilled by the coldness of manner of the young girl. Yes, he realised that she did not now, and never would, love him. That being the case, what use was there in his seeing her? Yet on the morrow, as well as on the following days, he did not fail to go to the little house on the Rue des Orfèvres. The hours which he could not pass there were sad enough, tortured as he was by his uncertainties, distressed by his mental struggles. He was never calm, except when he was near her as she sat at her frame. Provided that she was by his side, it seemed to him that he could resign himself to the acceptance of the fact that he was disagreeable to her.

Every morning he arrived at an early hour, spoke of the work, then seated himself as if his presence there were absolutely necessary. Then he was in a state of enchantment simply to look at her, with her finely cut features, her motionless profile, which seemed bathed in the liquid golden tints of her hair; and he watched in ecstasy the skilful play of her flexible hands, as she moved them up and down in the midst of the needlefuls of gold or silk. She had become so habituated to his presence that she was quite at her ease, and treated him as a comrade. Nevertheless, he always felt that there was between them something unexpressed which

grieved him to the heart, he knew not why. Occasionally she looked up, regarding him with an amused, half-mocking air, and with an inquiring, impatient expression in her face. Then, finding he was intensely embarrassed, she at once became very cold and distant.

But Felicien had discovered one way in which he could rouse her, and he took advantage of it. It was this—to talk to her of her art, of the ancient masterpieces of embroidery he had seen, either preserved among the treasures of cathedrals, or copies of which were engraved in books. For instance, there were the superb copes: that of Charlemagne, in red silk, with the great eagles with unfurled wings; and the cope of Sion, which is decorated with a multitude of saintly figures. Then the dalmatic, which is said to be the most beautiful piece of embroidery in the whole world; the Imperial dalmatic, on which is celebrated the glory of Jesus Christ upon the earth and in heaven, the Transfiguration, and the Last Judgment, in which the different personages are embroidered in silks of various colours, and in silver and gold. Also, there is a wonderful tree of Jesse, an orfrey of silk upon satin, which is so perfect it seems as if it were detached from a window of the fifteenth century; Abraham at the foot, then David, Solomon, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and at the very top the Saviour.

Among the admirable chasubles he had seen, one in particular was touching in its simplicity. It represented Christ on the Cross, and the drops of blood from His side and His feet were made by little splashes of red silk on the cloth of gold, while in the foreground was Mary, tenderly supported by Saint John.

On another one, which is called the chasuble of Naintré, the Virgin is seated in majesty, with richly-wrought sandals on her feet, and holding the Infant Jesus on her knees. Others, and still others of marvellous workmanship were alluded to, venerable not only from their great age and the beautiful faith that they expressed, but from a richness unknown in our time, preserving the odour of the incense of tabernacles and the mystic light which seemed to come from the slightly-faded gold.

‘Ah!’ sighed Angelique, ‘all those exquisite things are finished now. We can only find certain tones to remind us of their perfection.’

With feverish hands and sparkling eyes she stopped working when Felicien related to her the history of the most noted men and women who were embroiderers in the olden time—Simonne de Gaules, Colin Jolye, and others whose names have come down to us through the ages. Then, after a few moments, she took up her needles again, and made them fly vigorously, as she appeared transfigured, and guarded on her face the traces of the delight her artist nature had received in listening to all these accounts. Never had she seemed to him more beautiful, so enthusiastic was she, so maidenly and so pure, seated there in the brighter surroundings of so many coloured silks, applying herself with unfailing exactitude to her work, into the slightest details of which she put her whole soul. When he had left off speaking he looked at her earnestly, until roused by the silence, she realised the excited state into which all these histories had thrown her, and became as embarrassed as if she had done something wrong.

‘Oh, dear, look; all my silks are entangled again! Mother, please not to move about so much.’

Hubertine, who had not stirred at all, was amused, but simply smiled without saying anything. At first she had been rather disturbed by the constant attentions of the young man, and had talked the matter over thoroughly with Hubert one evening in their room. But they could not help being drawn towards him, and as in every respect his appearance was good and his manners perfectly respectful, they concluded it was not necessary to object to interviews from which Angelique derived so much happiness. So matters were allowed to take their way, and she watched over the young people with a loving air of protection.

Moreover, she herself for many days had been oppressed by the lamenting caresses of her husband, who seemed never to weary of asking her if he had been forgiven. This month was the anniversary of the time when they had lost their child, and each year at this date they had the same regrets and the same longings; he, trembling at her feet, happy to realise that he was pardoned; she, loving and distressed, blaming herself for everything, and despairing that Fate had been inexorable to all their prayers. They spoke of all this to no one, were the same to outsiders in every way, but this increase of tenderness between them came from their room like a silent perfume, disengaged itself from their persons at the least movement, by each word, and by their way of looking at each other, when it seemed as if for the moment they almost exchanged souls. All this was like the grave accompaniment, the deep continuous bass, upon which sang in clear notes the two hearts of the young couple.

One week had passed, and the work on the mitre advanced. These daily meetings had assumed a great and sweet familiarity.

‘The forehead should be very high, should it not? Without any trace of eyebrows?’

‘Yes, very high, and not the slightest shade. Quite like an old miniature.’

‘Will you pass me the white silk?’

‘Wait a minute, that I may thread it.’

He helped her, and this union of work put them at their ease. It made the occupation of each day seem perfectly natural to them both, and without a word of love ever having been spoken, without their hands having once met by a voluntary touch, the bond between them grew stronger each hour, and they were henceforth eternally united one to the other. It was sufficient for them to have lived until now.

‘Father, what are you doing that we no longer hear you?’

She turned and saw Hubert, who was occupied in winding a long spool, as his eyes were fixed abstractedly on his wife.

‘I am preparing some gold thread for your mother.’

And from the reel taken to his wife, from the mute thanks of Hubertine, from the constant little attentions her husband gave her, there was a warm, caressing breath which surrounded and enveloped Angelique and Felicien as they both bent again over the frame. The workroom itself, this ancient hall, as it might almost be called, with its old tools and its peace of other ages, was an unconscious accomplice in this work of union. It seemed so far away from the noise of the street, remote as if in dreamy depths, in this country of good,

simple souls, where miracles reign, the easy realisation of all joys.

In five days the mitre was to be finished; and Angelique, now sure that it would be ready to be delivered, and that she would even have twenty-four hours to spare, took a long breath of satisfaction, and seemed suddenly astonished at finding Felicien so near her, with his elbows on the trestle. Had they really become such intimate friends? She no longer attempted to struggle against what she realised was his conquering power; her half-malicious smiles ceased at what he tried to keep back, and which she so well understood, in spite of his subterfuges. What was it, then, that had made her as if asleep, in her late restless waiting? And the eternal question returned, the question that she asked herself every evening when she went to her room. Did she love him? For hours, in the middle of her great bed, she had turned over again and again these words, seeking for meanings she could not find, and thinking she was too ignorant to explain them. But that night, all at once, she felt her heart was softened by some inexplicable happiness. She cried nervously, without reason, and hid her head in her pillow that no one might hear her.

Yes, now she loved him; she loved him enough to be willing to die for him. But why? But how? She could not tell, she never would know; simply from her whole heart came the cry that she did indeed love him. The light had come to her at last; this new, overpowering joy overwhelmed her like the most ardent rays of the sun.

For a long time her tears flowed, but not from sorrow. On the contrary, she was filled with an inex-

plicable confusion of happiness that was indefinable, regretting now, more deeply than ever, that she had not made a *confidante* of Hubertine. To-day her secret burdened her, and she made an earnest vow to herself that henceforth she would be as cold as an icicle towards Felicien, and would suffer everything rather than allow him to see her tenderness. He should never know it. To love him, merely to love him, without even acknowledging it, that was the punishment, the trial she must undergo to pardon her fault. It would be to her in reality a delicious suffering. She thought of the martyrs of whom she had read in the 'Golden Legend,' and it seemed to her that she was their sister in torturing herself in this way, and that her guardian angel, Agnes, would look at her henceforward with sadder, sweeter eyes than ever.

The following day Angelique finished the mitre. She had embroidered with split silk, light as gossamer, the little hands and feet, which were the only points of white, naked flesh that came out from the royal mantle of golden hair. She perfected the face with all the delicacy of the purest lily, wherein the gold seemed like the blood in the veins under the delicate, silken skin. And this face, radiant as the sun, was turned heavenward, as the youthful saint was borne upward by the angels toward the distant horizon of the blue plain.

When Felicien entered that day, he exclaimed with admiration :

'Oh ! how exactly she looks like you.'

It was an involuntary expression ; an acknowledgment of the resemblance he had purposely put in the design. He realised the fact after he had spoken, and blushed deeply.

‘That is indeed true, my little one; she has the same beautiful eyes that you have,’ said Hubert, who had come forward to examine the work.

Hubertine merely smiled now, having made a similar remark many days before, and she was surprised and grieved when she heard Angelique reply in a harsh, disagreeable tone of voice, like what she sometimes had in her fits of obstinacy years ago:

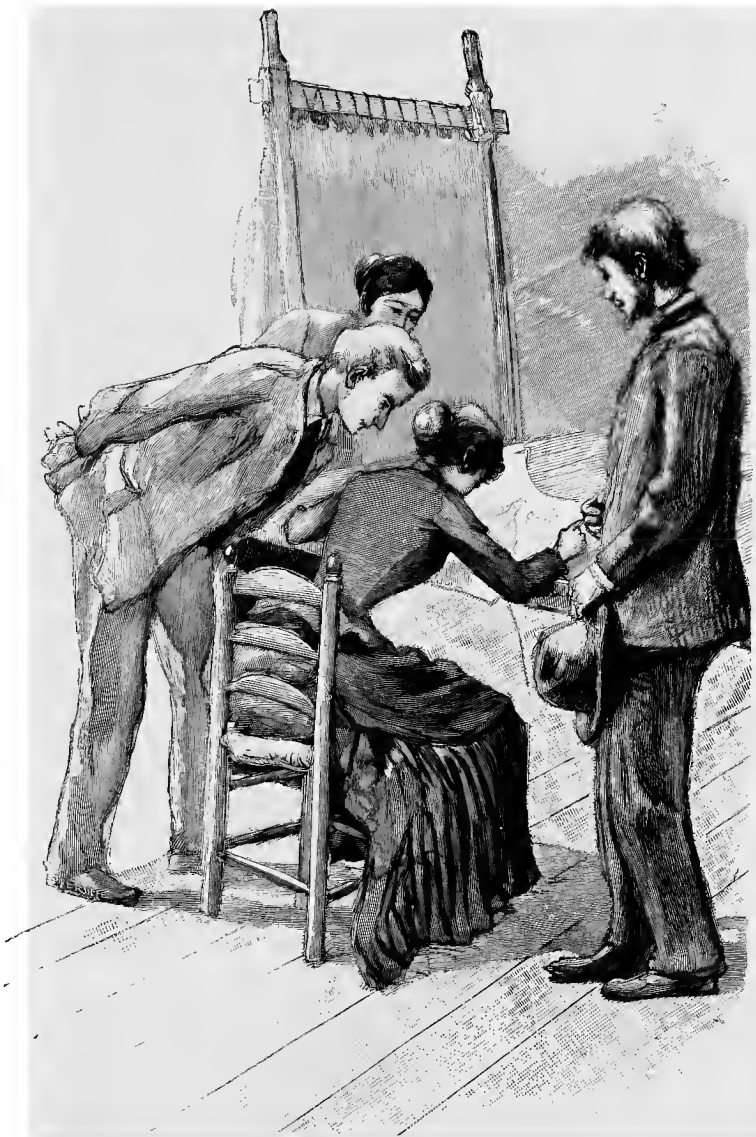
‘My beautiful eyes! Why will you make fun of me in that way? I know as well as you do that I am very ugly.’

Then, getting up, she shook out her dress, over-acting her assumed character of a harsh, avaricious girl.

‘Ah, at last! It is really finished! I am thankful, for it was too much of a task, too heavy a burden on my shoulders. Do you know, I would never undertake to make another one for the same price?’

Felicien listened to her in amazement. Could it be that after all she still cared only for money? Had he been mistaken when he thought at times she was so exquisitely tender, and so passionately devoted to her artistic work? Did she in reality wish for the pay her labour brought her? and was she so indifferent that she rejoiced at the completion of her task, wishing neither to see nor to hear of it again? For several days he had been discouraged as he sought in vain for some pretext of continuing, later on, visits that gave him such pleasure. But, alas! it was plain that she did not care for him in the least, and that she never would love him. His suffering was so great that he grew very pale and could scarcely speak.

‘But, Mademoiselle, will you not make up the mitre?’



'She has the same beautiful eyes that you have.'

‘No, mother can do it so much better than I can. I am too happy at the thought that I have nothing more to do with it.’

‘But do you not like the work which you do so well?’

‘I? I do not like anything in the world.’

Hubertine was obliged to speak to her sternly, and tell her to be quiet. She then begged Felicien to be so good as to pardon her nervous child, who was a little weary from her long-continued application. She added that the mitre would be at his disposal at an early hour on the following morning. It was the same as if she had asked him to go away, but he could not leave. He stood and looked around him in this old workroom, filled with shade and with peace, and it seemed to him as if he were being driven from Paradise. He had spent so many sweet hours there in the illusion of his brightest fancies, that it was like tearing his very heart-strings to think all this was at an end. What troubled him the worst was his inability to explain matters, and that he could only take with him such a fearful uncertainty. At last he said good-day, resolved to risk everything at the first opportunity rather than not to know the truth.

Scarcely had he closed the door when Hubert asked:

‘What is the matter with you, my dear child? Are you ill?’

‘No, indeed. It is simply that I am tired of having that young man here. I do not wish to see him again.’

Then Hubertine added: ‘Very well; you will not see him again. But nothing should ever prevent one from being polite.’

Angelique, making some trivial excuse, hurried up to her room as quickly as possible. Then she gave free course to her tears. Ah, how intensely happy she was, yet how she suffered ! Her poor, dear beloved ; he was sad enough when he found he must leave her ! But she must not forget that she had made a vow to the saints, that although she loved him better than life, he should never know it.

CHAPTER VIII

ON the evening of this same day, immediately after leaving the dinner-table, Angelique complained of not being at all well, and went up at once to her room. The agitation and excitement of the morning, her struggles against her true self, had quite exhausted her. She made haste to go to bed, and covering her head with the sheet, with a desperate feeling of disappearing for ever if she could, again the tears came to her relief.

The hours passed slowly, and soon it was night—a warm July night, the heavy, oppressive quiet of which entered through the window, which had been left wide open. In the dark heavens glistened a multitude of stars. It must have been nearly eleven o'clock, and the moon, already grown quite thin in its last quarter, would not rise until midnight.

And in the obscure chamber, Angelique still wept nervously a flow of inexhaustible tears, seemingly without reason, when a slight noise at her door caused her to lift up her head.

There was a short silence, when a voice called her tenderly.

‘Angelique! Angelique! My darling child!’

She recognised the voice of Hubertine. Without

doubt the latter, in her room with her husband, had just heard the distant sound of sobbing, and anxious, half-undressed, she had come upstairs to find out what was the matter with her daughter.

‘Angelique, are you ill, my dear?’

Retaining her breath, the young girl made no answer. She did not wish to be unkind, but her one absorbing idea at this moment was of solitude. To be alone was the only possible alleviation of her trouble. A word of consolation, a caress, even from her mother, would have distressed her. She imagined that she saw her standing at the other side of the door, and from the delicacy of the rustling movement on the tiled floor she thought she must be barefooted. Two or three minutes passed, and she knew the kind watcher had not left her place, but that, stooping, and holding with her beautiful hands the clothing so carelessly thrown over her, she still listened at the keyhole.

Hubertine, hearing nothing more, not even a sigh, did not like to call again. She was very sure that she had heard sobs; but if the child had at last been able to sleep, what good would it do to awaken her? She waited, however, another moment, troubled by the thought of a grief which her daughter hid from her, confusedly imagining what it might be from the tender emotion with which her heart seemed filled from sympathy. At last she concluded to go down as she had come up, quietly, her hands being so familiar with every turning that she needed no candle, and leaving behind her no other sound than the soft, light touch of her bare feet.

Then, sitting up in bed, Angelique in her turn listened. So profound was the outward silence that

she could clearly distinguish the slight pressure of the heel on the edge of each step of the stairway. At the foot, the door of the chamber was opened, then closed again; afterward, she heard a scarcely-distinct murmur, an affectionate, yet sad blending of voices in a half-whisper. No doubt it was what her father and mother were saying of her; the fears and the hopes they had in regard to her. For a long time that continued, although they must have put out their light and gone to bed.

Never before had any night sounds in this old house mounted in this way to her ears. Ordinarily, she slept the heavy, tranquil sleep of youth; she heard nothing whatever after placing her head upon her pillow; whilst now, in the wakefulness caused by the inner combat against an almost overpowering sentiment of affection which she was determined to conquer, it seemed to her as if the whole house were in unison with her, that it was also in love, and mourned like herself. Were not the Huberts, too, sad, as they stifled their tears and thought of the child they had lost long ago, whose place, alas! had never been filled? She knew nothing of this in reality, but she had a sensation in this warm night of the watch of her parents below her, and of the disappointment in their lives, which they could not forget, notwithstanding their great love for each other, which was always as fresh as when they were young.

Whilst she was seated in this way, listening in the house that trembled and sighed, Angelique lost all self-control, and again the tears rolled down her face, silently, but warm and living, as if they were her life's blood. One question above all others had troubled her since the early morning, and had grieved her deeply. Was she right in having sent away Felicien in despair,

stabbed to the heart by her coldness, and with the thought that she did not love him? She knew that she did love him, yet she had willingly caused him to suffer, and now in her turn she was suffering intensely. Why should there be so much pain connected with love? Did the saints wish for tears? Could it be that Agnes, her guardian angel, was angry in the knowledge that she was happy? Now, for the first time, she was distracted by a doubt. Before this, whenever she thought of the hero she awaited, and who must come sooner or later, she had arranged everything much more satisfactorily. When the right time arrived he was to enter her very room, where she would immediately recognise and welcome him, when they would both go away together, to be united for evermore. But how different was the reality! He had come, and, instead of what she had foreseen, their meeting was most unsatisfactory; they were equally unhappy, and were eternally separated. To what purpose? Why had this result come to pass? Who had exacted from her so strange a vow, that, although he might be very dear to her, she was never to let him know it?

But, yet again, Angelique was especially grieved from the fear that she might have been bad and done some very wrong thing. Perhaps the original sin that was in her had manifested itself again as when she was a little girl! She thought over all her acts of pretended indifference: the mocking air with which she had received Felicien, and the malicious pleasure she took in giving him a false idea of herself. And the astonishment at what she had done, added to a cutting remorse for her cruelty, increased her distress. Now, her whole heart was filled with a deep infinite pity for the suffer-

ing she had caused him without really meaning to do so.

She saw him constantly before her, as he was when he left the house in the morning : the despairing expression of his face, his troubled eyes, his trembling lips ; and in imagination she followed him through the streets, as he went home, pale, utterly desolate, and wounded to the heart's core by her. Where was he now ? Perhaps at this hour he was really ill !

She wrung her hands in agony, distressed that she could not at once repair the evil she had done. Ah ! how she revolted at the idea of having made another suffer, for she had always wished to be good, and to render those about her as happy as possible.

Twelve o'clock would ere long ring out from the old church-tower ; the great elms of the garden of the Bishop's palace hid the moon, which was just appearing above the horizon, and the chamber was still dark. Then, letting her head fall back upon the pillow, Angelique dwelt no longer upon these disturbing questions, as she wished to go to sleep. But this she could not do ; although she kept her eyes closed, her mind was still active ; she thought of the flowers which every night during the last fortnight she had found when she went upstairs upon the balcony before her window. Each evening it was a lovely bouquet of violets, which Felicien had certainly thrown there from the Clos-Marie. She recollected having told him that flowers generally gave her a sick headache, whilst violets alone had the singular virtue of calming her, and so he had sent her quiet nights, a perfumed sleep refreshed by pleasant dreams. This evening she had placed the bouquet by her bedside. All at once she had the happy thought

of taking it into her bed with her, putting it near her cheek, and, little by little, being soothed with its sweet breath. The purple blossoms did indeed do her good. Not that she slept, however; but she lay there with closed eyes, penetrated by the refreshing odour that came from his gift; happy to await events, in a repose and confident abandonment of her whole being.

But suddenly she started. It was past midnight. She opened her eyes, and was astonished to find her chamber filled with a clear bright light. Above the great elms the moon rose slowly, dimming the stars in the pale sky. Through the window she saw the apse of the cathedral, almost white, and it seemed to her as if it were the reflection of this whiteness which entered her room, like the light of the dawn, fresh and pure. The whitewashed walls and beams, all this blank nudity was increased by it, enlarged, and moved back as if it were unreal as a dream.

She still recognised, however, the old, dark, oaken furniture—the wardrobe, the chest and the chairs, with the shining edges of their elaborate carvings. The bedstead alone—this great square, royal couch—seemed new to her, as if she saw it for the first time, with its high columns supporting its canopy of old-fashioned, rose-tinted cretonne, now bathed with such a sheet of deep moonlight that she half thought she was on a cloud in the midst of the heavens, borne along by a flight of silent, invisible wings. For a moment she felt the full swinging of it; it did not seem at all strange or unnatural to her. But her sight soon grew accustomed to the reality; her bed was again in its usual corner, and she was in it, not moving her head, her eyes alone turning from side to side, as she lay in the

midst of this lake of beaming rays, with the bouquet of violets upon her lips.

Why was it that she was thus in a state of waiting? Why could she not sleep? She was now sure that she expected someone. That she had grown quite calm was a sign that her hero was about to appear. This consoling light, which put to flight the darkness of all bad dreams, announced his arrival. He was on his way, and the moon, whose brightness almost equalled that of the sun, was simply his forerunner. She must be ready to greet him.

The chamber was as if hung with white velvet now, so they could see each other well. Then she got up, dressed herself thoroughly, putting on a simple white gown of foulard, the same she had worn the day of their excursion to the ruins of Hauteœur. She did not braid her hair, but let it hang over her shoulders. She put a pair of slippers upon her bare feet, and drawing an armchair in front of the window, seated herself, and waited in patience.

Angelique did not pretend to know how he would appear. Without doubt, he would not come up the stairs, and it might be that she would simply see him over the Clos-Marie, while she leaned from the balcony. Still, she kept her place on the threshold of the window, as it seemed to her useless to go and watch for him just yet. So vague was her idea of real life, so mystic was love, that she did not understand in her imaginative nature why he might not pass through the walls, like the saints in the legends. Why should not miracles come now, as in the olden days, for had not all this been ordained from the beginning?

Not for a moment did she think she was alone to

receive him. No, indeed! she felt as if she were surrounded by the crowd of virgins who had always been near her, since her early youth. They entered on the rays of the moonlight, they came from the great dark trees with their blue-green tops in the Bishop's garden, from the most intricate corners of the entanglement of the stone front of the Cathedral. From all the familiar and beloved horizon of the Chevrotte, from the willows, the grasses, and bushes, the young girl heard the dreams which came back to her, the hopes, the desires, the visions, all that which she had put of herself into inanimate objects as she saw them daily, and which they now returned to her. Never had the voices of the invisible unknown spoken so clearly. She listened to them as they came from afar, recognising particularly in this warm, beautiful night, so calm that there was not the slightest movement in the air, the delicate sound which she was wont to call the fluttering of the robe of Agnes, when her dear guardian angel came to her side. She laughed quietly to know that she was now by her, and waiting with the others who were near her.

Time passed, but it did not seem long to Angelique. She was quite unconscious of what was passing around her. It appeared to her perfectly natural, and exactly as it had been foretold, when at last she saw Felicien striding over the balustrade of the balcony.

His tall figure came out in full relief before the background of the white sky; he did not approach the open window, but remained in its luminous shadow.

‘Do not be afraid. It is I. I have come to see you.’

She was not in the slightest way alarmed; she

simply thought that he was exact to the hour of meeting, and said calmly:

‘You mounted by the timber framework, did you not?’

‘Yes, by the framework.’

The idea of this way made her laugh, and he himself was amused by it. He had in fact pulled himself up by the pent-house shed; then, climbing along the principal rafters from there, whose ends were supported by the string-course of the first story, he had without difficulty reached the balcony.

‘I was expecting you. Will you not come nearer me?’

Felicien, who had arrived in a state of anger, not knowing how he had dared to come, but with many wild ideas in his head, did not move, so surprised and delighted was he by this unexpected reception. As he had come at last, Angelique was now certain that the saints did not prohibit her from loving, for she heard them welcoming him with her by a laugh as delicate as a breath of the night. Where in the world had she ever found so ridiculous an idea as to think that Agnes would be angry with her! On the contrary, Agnes was radiant with a joy that she felt as it descended on her shoulders and enveloped her like a caress from two great wings. All those who had died for love showed great compassion for youthful troubles, and only returned to earth on summer nights, that, although invisible, they might watch those young hearts who were sorrowful from affection.

‘But why do you not come to me? I was waiting for you.’

Then, hesitatingly, Felicien approached. He had been so excited, so carried away by anger at her indif-

ference, that he had said she should be made to love him, and that, were it necessary, he would carry her away even against her will. And lo! now finding her so gentle as he penetrated almost to the entrance of this chamber, so pure and white, he became subdued at once, and as gentle and submissive as a child.

He took three steps forward. But he was afraid, and not daring to go farther, he fell on his knees at the end of the balcony.

‘Could you but know,’ he said, ‘the abominable tortures I have passed through. I have never imagined a worse suffering. Really, the only true grief is to think that you are not beloved by the person to whom you have given your affection. I would willingly give up all else; would consent to be poor, dying from hunger, or racked by pain; but I will not pass another day with this terrible doubt gnawing at my heart, of thinking that you do not love me. Be good, I pray you, and pity me.’

She listened to him, silent, overcome with compassion, yet very happy withal.

‘This morning you sent me away in such a dreadful manner! I had fancied to myself that you had changed your feelings towards me, and that, appreciating my affection, you liked me better. But, alas! I found you exactly as you had been on the first day, cold, indifferent, treating me as you would have done any other simple customer who passed, recalling me harshly to the commonplaces of life. On the stairway I staggered. Once outside, I ran, and was afraid I might scream aloud. Then, the moment I reached home, it seemed to me I should stifle were I to enter the house. So I rushed out into the fields, walking

by chance first on one side of the road and then on another. Evening came, and I was still wandering up and down. But the torment of spirit moved faster than ever and devoured me. When one is hopelessly in love, it is impossible to escape from the pains accompanying one's affection. Listen!' he said, and he touched his breast; 'it is here that you stabbed me, and the point of the knife still continues to penetrate deeper and deeper.'

He gave a long sigh at the keen recollection of his torture.

'I found myself at last in a thicket, overcome by my distress, like a tree that has been drawn up by the roots. To me, the only thing that existed in life, in the future, was you. The thought that you might never be mine was more than I could bear. Already my feet were so weary that they would no longer support me. I felt that my hands were growing icy cold, and my head was filled with the strangest fancies. And that is why I am here. I do not know at all how I came, or where I found the necessary strength to bring me to you. You must try to forgive me; but had I been forced to do so, I would have broken open doors with my fists, I would have clambered up to this balcony in broad daylight, for my will was no longer under my control, and I was quite wild. Now, will you not pardon me?'

She was a little in the shadow, and he, on his knees in the full moonlight, could not see that she had grown very pale in her tender repentance, and was too touched by his story to be able to speak. He thought that she was still insensible to his pleadings, and he joined his hands together most beseechingly.

‘All my interest in you commenced long ago. It was one night when I saw you for the first time, here at your window. You were only a vague, white shadow ; I could scarcely distinguish one of your features, yet I saw you and imagined you just as you are in reality. But I was timid and afraid, so for several days I wandered about here, never daring to try to meet you in the open day. And, in addition, since this is a confession, I must tell you everything ; you pleased me particularly in this half mystery ; it would have disturbed me to have you come out from it, for my great happiness was to dream of you as if you were an apparition, or an unknown something to be worshipped from afar, without ever hoping to become acquainted with you. Later on, I knew who you were, for after all it is difficult to resist the temptation to know what may be the realisation of one’s dream. It was then that my restlessness commenced. It has increased at each meeting. Do you recollect the first time that we spoke to each other in the field near by, on that forenoon when I was examining the painted window ? Never in my life did I feel so awkward as then, and it was not strange that you ridiculed me so. Afterwards I frightened you, and realised that I continued to be very unfortunate in following you, even in the visits you made to the poor people. Already I ceased to be master of my own actions, and did things that astonished me beyond measure, and which, under usual circumstances, I would not have dared attempt. For instance, when I presented myself here with the order for a mitre, I was pushed forward by an involuntary force, as, personally, I dared not do it, knowing that I might make you angry. But at present I cannot

regain my old self, I can only obey my impulses. I know that you do not like me, and yet, as you see, in spite of it all I have come back to you, that I may hear you tell me so. If you would but try to understand how miserable I am. Do not love me if it is not in your heart to do so. I must accept my fate. But at least allow me to love you. Be as cold as you please, be hateful if you will—I shall adore you whatever you may choose to be. I only ask to be able to see you, even without any hope; merely for the joy of living thus at your feet.'

Felicien stopped, disheartened, losing all courage as he thought he would never find any way of touching her heart. And he did not see that Angelique smiled, half hidden as she was by the open window-sash. It was an invincible smile, that, little by little, spread over her whole face. Ah! the dear fellow! How simple and trusting he was as he outpoured the prayer of his heart, filled with new longings and love, in bowing before her, as before the highest ideal of all his youthful dreams.

To think that she had ever been so foolish as at first to try to avoid all meetings with him, and then, later on, had determined that although she could not help loving him, he should never know it! Such folly on her part was quite inexplicable. Since love is right, and is the fate of all, what good could be gained by making martyrs of them both?

A complete silence ensued, and in her enthusiastic, imaginative, nervous state, she heard, louder than ever, in the quiet of the warm night, the voices of the saints about her, who said love was never forbidden when it was so ardent and true as this. Behind her back a

bright flash of light had suddenly appeared; scarcely a breath, but a delicate wave from the moon upon the chamber floor. An invisible finger, no doubt that of her guardian angel, was placed upon her mouth, as if to unseal her lips and relieve her from her vow. Henceforth she could freely unburden herself and tell the truth. All that which was powerful and tender in her surroundings now whispered to her words which seemed to come from the infinite unknown.

Then, at last, Angelique spoke.

‘Ah! yes, I recollect—I recollect it all.’

And Felicien was at once carried away with delight by the music of this voice, whose extreme charm was so great over him that his love seemed to increase simply from listening to it.

‘Yes, I remember well when you came in the night. You were so far away those first evenings that the little sound you made in walking left me in quite an uncertain state. At last I realised perfectly that it was you who approached me, and a little later I recognised your shadow. At length, one evening you showed yourself boldly, on a beautiful, bright night like this, in the full white light of the moon. You came out so slowly from the inanimate objects near you, like a creation from all the mysteries that surrounded me, exactly as I had expected to see you for a long time, and punctual to the meeting.

‘I have never forgotten the great desire to laugh, which I kept back, but which broke forth in spite of me, when you saved the linen that was being carried away by the Chevrotte. I recollect my anger when you robbed me of my poor people, by giving them so much money, and thus making me appear as a miser. I can

still recall my fear on the evening when you forced me to run so fast through the grass with my bare feet. Oh, yes, I have not forgotten anything—not the slightest thing.’

At this last sentence her voice, pure and crystalline, was a little broken by the thought of those magic words of the young man, the power of which she felt so deeply when he said, ‘I love you,’ and a deep blush passed over her face. And he—he listened to her with delight.

‘It is indeed true that I did wrong to tease you. When one is ignorant, one is often so foolish. One does many things which seem necessary, simply from the fear of being found fault with if following the impulses of the heart. But my remorse for all this was deep, and my sufferings, in consequence, were as great as yours. Were I to try to explain all this to you, it would be quite impossible for me to do so. When you came to us with your drawing of Saint Agnes, oh! I could have cried out, “Thank you, thank you!” I was perfectly enchanted to work for you, as I thought you would certainly make us a daily visit. And yet, think of it! I pretended to be indifferent, as if I had taken upon myself the task of doing all in my power to drive you from the house. Has one ever the need of being wilfully unhappy? Whilst in reality I longed to welcome you and to receive you with open hands, there seemed to be in the depths of my nature another woman than myself, who revolted, who was afraid of and mistrusted you—whose delight it was to torture you with uncertainty, in the vague idea of setting up a quarrel, the cause of which, in a time long passed, had been quite forgotten. I am not always good; often in my

soul things seem to creep up that I cannot explain or account for. The worst of all was that I dared to speak to you of money. Fancy it, then! Of money! I, who have never thought of it, who would accept chariots of it, only for the pleasure of making it rain down as I wished, among the needy! What a malicious amusement I gave myself in thus calumniating my character. Will you ever forgive me?'

CHAPTER IX

FELICIEN was at her feet. Until now he had kept his place in the remote corner of the balcony. But in the intense happiness she gave him in thus unfolding the innermost secrets of her soul he had drawn himself on his knees towards her, as he approached the window. This great, illimitable joy was so unlooked for, that he yielded to it in all the infinitude of its hopes for the future.

He half whispered :

‘Ah, dear soul, pure, kind, and beautiful, your wonderful goodness has cured me as with a breath! I know not now if I have ever suffered. And, in your turn, you will now have to pardon me, for I have an acknowledgment to make to you. I must tell you who I am.’

He was troubled at the thought he could no longer disguise himself or his position, since she had confided so freely and entirely in him. It would be disloyal in the highest degree to do so. Yet he hesitated, lest he might, after all, lose her, were she to be anxious about the future when at last she knew the facts.

And she waited for him to speak again, a little malicious in spite of herself.

In a very low voice he continued :

‘I have told a falsehood to your parents.’

‘Yes, I know it,’ she said as she smiled.

‘No, you do not know it; you could not possibly know it, for all that happened too long ago. I only paint on glass for my own pleasure, and as a simple amusement; you really ought to be told of that.’

Then, with a quick movement, she put her hand on his mouth, as if she wished to prevent this explanation.

‘I do not care to hear any more. I have been expecting you. I knew that sooner or later you would come, and you have done so. That is all-sufficient.’

They talked no longer for a while. That little hand over his lips seemed almost too great a happiness for him.

‘When the right time comes, then I shall know all. Yet I assure you that I am ignorant of nothing connected with you, for everything had been revealed to me before our first meeting. You were to be, and can be, only the handsomest, the richest, and the most noble of men, the one above all others; for that has ever been my dream, and in the sure certainty of its full accomplishment I wait calmly. You are the chosen hero who it was ordained should come, and I am yours.’

A second time she interrupted herself in the tremor of the words she pronounced. She did not appear to say them by herself alone; they came to her as if sent by the beautiful night from the great white heavens, from the old trees, and the aged stones sleeping outside and dreaming aloud the fancies of the young girl. From behind her voices also whispered them to her, the voices of her friends in the ‘Golden Legend,’ with whom she had peopled the air and the space around her. In this

atmosphere she had ever lived—mysticism, in which she revelled until it seemed fact on one side, and the daily work of life on the other. Nothing seemed strange to her.

Now but one word remained to be said—that which would express all the long waiting, the slow creation of affection, the constantly increasing fever of restlessness. It escaped from her lips like a cry from a distance, from the white flight of a bird mounting upward in the light of the early dawn, in the pure whiteness of the chamber behind her.

‘I love you.’

Angelique, her two hands spread out, bent forward towards Felicien. And he recalled to himself the evening when she ran barefooted through the grass, making so adorable a picture that he pursued her in order to stammer in her ear these same words: ‘I love you.’ He knew that now she was simply replying to him with the same cry of affection, the eternal cry, which at last came from her freely-opened heart.

‘Yes, I love you. I am yours. Lead the way, and I will follow you wherever it may be.’

In this surrender of her soul she gave herself to him fully and entirely. It was the hereditary flame relighted within her—the pride and the passion she thought had been conquered, but which awoke at the wish of her beloved. He trembled before this innocence, so ardent and so ingenuous. He took her hands gently, and crossed them upon her breast. For a moment he looked at her, radiant with the intense happiness her confession had given him, unwilling to wound her delicacy in the slightest degree, and not thinking of yielding to the temptation of even kissing her hair.

‘You love me, and you know that I love you ! Ah ! what bliss there is in such knowledge.’

But they were suddenly drawn from their ecstatic state by a change about them. What did it all mean ? They realised that now they were looking at each other under a great white light. It seemed to them as if the brightness of the moon had been increased, and was as resplendent as that of the sun. It was in reality the daybreak, a slight shade of which already tinged with purple the tops of the elm-trees in the neighbouring gardens. What ? It could not be possible that the dawn had come ? They were astonished by it, for they did not realise so long a time had passed since they began to talk together on the balcony. She had as yet told him nothing, and he had so many things he wished to say !

‘Oh, stay one minute more, only one minute !’ he exclaimed.

The daylight advanced still faster—the smiling morning, already warm, of what was to be a hot day in summer. One by one the stars were extinguished, and with them fled the wandering visions, and all the host of invisible friends seemed to mount upward and to glide away on the moon’s rays.

Now, in the full, clear light, the room behind them had only its ordinary whiteness of walls and ceiling, and seemed quite empty with its old-fashioned furniture of dark oak. The velvet hangings were no longer there, and the bedstead had resumed its original shape, as it stood half hidden by the falling of one of its curtains.

‘Do stay ! Let me be near you only one minute more !’

Angelique, having risen, refused, and begged Felicien to leave immediately. Since the day had come, she had grown confused and anxious. The reality was now here. At her right hand, she seemed to hear a delicate movement of wings, whilst her hair was gently blown, although there was not the slightest breath of wind. Was it not Saint Agnes, who, having remained until the last, was now forced to leave, driven away by the sun?

‘No, leave me, I beg of you. I am unwilling you should stay longer.’

Then Felicien, obedient, withdrew.

To know that he was beloved was enough for him, and satisfied him. Still, before leaving the balcony, he turned, and looked at her again fixedly, as if he wished to carry away with him an indelible remembrance of her. They both smiled at each other as they stood thus, bathed with light, in this long caressing look.

At last he said :

‘I love you.’

And she gently repeated :

‘I love you.’

That was all, and he had in a moment, with the agility of a bird, gone down the woodwork of the corner of the building, while she, remaining on the balcony, leaned on the balustrade and watched him, with her tender, beautiful eyes. She had taken the bouquet of violets and breathed the perfume to cool her feverishness. When, in crossing the Clos-Marie, he lifted his head, he saw that she was kissing the flowers.

Scarcely had Felicien disappeared behind the willows, when Angelique was disturbed by hearing below the opening of the house-door. Four o’clock had just

struck, and no one was in the habit of getting up until two hours later. Her surprise increased when she recognised Hubertine, as it was always Hubert who went down the first. She saw her follow slowly the walks of the narrow garden, her arms hanging listlessly at her sides, as if, after a restless, sleepless night, a feeling of suffocating, a need of breathing the fresh air, had made her leave her room so early. And Hubertine was really very beautiful, with her clothes so hastily put on ; and she seemed very weary—happy, but in the deepest grief.

The morning of the next day, on waking from a sound sleep of eight hours, one of those sweet, deep, refreshing sleeps that come after some great happiness, Angelique ran to her window. The sky was clear, the air pure, and the fine weather had returned after a heavy shower of the previous evening. Delighted, she called out joyously to Hubert, who was just opening the blinds below her :

‘Father ! father ! do look at the beautiful sunlight ; Oh, how glad I am, for the procession will be superb !’

Dressing herself as quickly as possible, she hurried to go downstairs. It was on that day, July 28, that the Procession of the Miracle would pass through the streets of the upper town. Every summer at this date it was also a festival for the embroiderers ; all work was put aside, no needles were threaded, but the day was passed in ornamenting the house, after a traditional arrangement that had been transmitted from mother to daughter for four hundred years.

All the while that she was taking her coffee, Angelique talked of the hangings.

‘Mother, we must look at them at once, to see if they are in good order.’

‘We have plenty of time before us, my dear,’ replied Hubertine, in her quiet way. ‘We shall not put them up until afternoon.’

The decorations in question consisted of three large panels of the most admirable ancient embroidery, which the Huberts guarded with the greatest care as a sacred family relic, and which they brought out once a year on the occasion of the passing of this special procession.

The previous evening, according to a time-honoured custom, the Master of the Ceremonies, the good Abbé Cornille, had gone from door to door to notify the inhabitants of the route which would be taken by the bearers of the statue of Saint Agnes, accompanied by Monseigneur the Bishop, carrying the Holy Sacrament. For more than five centuries this route had been the same. The departure was made from the portal of Saint Agnes, then by the Rue des Orfèvres to the Grand Rue, to the Rue Basse, and after having gone through the whole of the lower town, it returned by the Rue Magloire and the Place du Cloître, to reappear again at the great front entrance of the Church. And the dwellers on all these streets, vying with each other in their zeal, decorated their windows, hung upon their walls their richest possessions in silks, satins, velvets, or tapestry, and strewed the pavements with flowers, particularly with the leaves of roses and carnations.

Angelique was very impatient until permission had been given her to take from the drawers, where they had been quietly resting for the past twelve months, the three pieces of embroidery.

‘They are in perfect order, mother. Nothing has happened to them,’ she said, as she looked at them, enraptured.

She had with the greatest care removed the mass of silk paper that protected them from the dust, and they now appeared in all their beauty. The three were consecrated to Mary. The Blessed Virgin receiving the visit of the Angel of the Annunciation; the Virgin Mother at the foot of the Cross; and the Assumption of the Virgin. They were made in the fifteenth century, of brightly coloured silks wrought on a golden background, and were wonderfully well preserved. The family had always refused to sell them, although very large sums had been offered by different churches, and they were justly proud of their possession.

‘Mother dear, may I not hang them up to-day?’

All these preparations required a great deal of time. Hubert was occupied the whole forenoon in cleaning the front of the old building. He fastened a broom to the end of a long stick, that he might dust all the wooden panels decorated with bricks, as far as the framework of the roof; then with a sponge he washed all the sub-basement of stone, and all the parts of the stairway tower that he could reach. When that was finished, the three superb pieces of embroidery were put in their places. Angelique attached them, by their rings to venerable nails that were in the walls; the Annunciation below the window at the left, the Assumption below the window at the right, while for the Calvary, the nails for that were above the great window of the first story, and she was obliged to use a step-ladder that she might hang it there in its turn. She had already embellished the window with flowers, so that

the ancient dwelling seemed to have gone back to the far-away time of its youth, with its embroideries of gold and of silk glistening in the beautiful sunshine of this festive day.

After the noon breakfast the activity increased in every direction, and the whole Rue des Orfèvres was now in excitement. To avoid the great heat, the procession would not move until five o'clock, but after twelve the town began to be decorated. Opposite the Huberts', the silversmith dressed his shop with draperies of an exquisite light blue, bordered with a silver fringe; while the wax-chandler, who was next to him, made use of his window-curtains of red cotton, which looked more brilliant than ever in the broad light of day. At each house there were different colours; a prodigality of stuffs, everything that people owned, even to rugs of all descriptions, were blowing about in the weary air of this hot summer afternoon. The street now seemed clothed, sparkling, and almost trembling with gaiety, as if changed into a gallery of fête open to the sky. All its inhabitants were rushing to and fro, pushing against each other, speaking loud, as if in their own homes; some of them carrying their arms full of objects, others climbing, driving nails, and calling vociferously. In addition to all this was the *reposoir*, or altar, that was being prepared at the corner of the Grand Rue, the arrangements for which called for the services of all the women of the neighbourhood, who eagerly offered their vases and candlesticks.

Angelique ran down to carry the two candelabra, of the style of the Empire, which they had on the mantelshelf of their parlour. She had not taken a moment's rest since the early morning, but had shown no signs of

fatigue, being, on the contrary, supported and carried above herself by her great inward happiness. And as she came back from her errand, her hair blown all about her face by the wind, Hubert began to tease her as she seated herself to strip off the leaves of the roses, and to put them in a great basket.

‘You could not do any more than you have done were it your wedding-day, my dear. Is it, then, that you are really to be married now?’

‘But yes! oh, yes! Why not?’ she answered gaily.

Hubertine smiled in her turn,

‘While waiting, my daughter, since the house is so satisfactorily arranged, the best thing for us to do is to go upstairs and dress.’

‘In a minute, mother. Look at my full basket.’

She had finished taking the leaves from the roses which she had reserved to throw before Monseigneur. The petals rained from her slender fingers; the basket was running over with its light, perfumed contents. Then, as she disappeared on the narrow stairway of the tower, she said, while laughing heartily :

‘We will be quick. I will make myself beautiful as a star!’

The afternoon advanced. Now the feverish movement in Beaumont-l’Eglise was calmed; a peculiar air of expectation seemed to fill the streets, which were all ready, and where everyone spoke softly, in hushed, whispering voices. The heat had diminished, as the sun’s rays grew oblique, and between the houses, so closely pressed the one against the others, there fell from the pale sky only a warm, fine shadow of a gentle, serene nature. The air of meditation was profound, as

if the old town had become simply a continuation of the Cathedral; the only sound of carriages that could be heard came up from Beaumont-la-Ville, the new town on the banks of the Ligneul, where many of the factories were not closed, as the proprietors disdained taking part in this ancient religious ceremony.

Soon after four o'clock the great bell of the northern tower, the one whose swinging stirred the house of the Huberts, began to ring; and it was at that very moment that Hubertine and Angelique reappeared. The former had put on a dress of pale buff linen, trimmed with a simple thread lace, but her figure was so slight and youthful in its delicate roundness that she looked as if she were the sister of her adopted daughter. Angelique wore her dress of white foulard, with its soft ruchings at the neck and wrists, and nothing else; neither earrings nor bracelets, only her bare wrists and throat, soft in their satiny whiteness as they came out from the delicate material, light as the opening of a flower. An invisible comb, put in place hastily, scarcely held the curls of her golden hair, which was carelessly dressed. She was artless and proud, of a most touching simplicity, and, indeed, 'beautiful as a star.'

'Ah!' she said, 'the bell! that is to show that Monseigneur has left his palace.'

The bell continued to sound loud and clear in the great purity of the atmosphere. The Huberts installed themselves at the wide-opened window of the first story, the mother and daughter being in front, with their elbows resting on the bar of support, and the husband and father standing behind them. These were their accustomed places; they could not possibly have found better, as

they would be the very first to see the procession as it came from the farther end of the church, without missing even a single candle of the marching-past.

‘Where is my basket?’ asked Angelique.

Hubert was obliged to take and pass to her the basket of rose-leaves, which she held between her arms, pressed against her breast.

‘Oh that bell!’ she at last murmured; ‘it seems as if it would lull us to sleep!’

And still the waiting continued in the little vibrating house, sonorous with the musical movement; the street and the great square waited, subdued by this great trembling, whilst the hangings on every side blew about more quietly in the air of the coming evening. The perfume of roses was very sweet.

Another half-hour passed. Then at the same moment the two halves of the portal of Saint Agnes were opened, and they perceived the very depths of the church, dark in reality, but dotted with little bright spots from the tapers. First the bearer of the Cross appeared, a sub-deacon in a tunic, accompanied by the acolytes, each one of whom held a lighted candle in his hand. Behind them hurried along the Master of the Ceremonies, the good Abbé Cornille, who, after having assured himself that everything was in perfect order in the street, stopped under the porch, and assisted a moment at the passing out, in order to be sure that the places assigned to each section had been rightly taken. The various societies of laymen opened the march: charitable associations, schools, by rank of seniority, and numerous public organisations. There were a great many children: little girls all in white, like brides, and little bareheaded boys, with curly hair, dressed in

their best, like princes, already looking in every direction to find where their mothers were. A splendid fellow, nine years of age, walked by himself in the middle, clad like Saint John the Baptist, with a sheepskin over his thin, bare shoulders. Four little girls, covered with pink ribbons, bore a shield on which was a sheaf of ripe wheat. Then there were young girls grouped around a banner of the Blessed Virgin; ladies in black, who also had their special banner of crimson silk, on which was embroidered a portrait of Saint Joseph. There were other and still other banners, in velvet or in satin, balanced at the end of gilded bâtons. The brotherhoods of men were no less numerous; penitents of all colours, but especially the grey penitents in dark linen suits, wearing cowls, and whose emblem made a great sensation—a large cross, with a wheel, to which were attached the instruments of the Passion.

Angelique exclaimed with tenderness when the children came by:

‘Oh, the blessed darlings! Do look at them all!’

One, no higher than a boot, scarcely three years of age, proudly tottered along on his little feet, and looked so comical that she plunged her hands into her basket and literally covered him with flowers. He quite disappeared under them for an instant; he had roses in his hair and on his shoulders. The exquisite little laughing shout he uttered was enjoyed on every side, and flowers rained down from all the windows as the cherub passed. In the humming silence of the street one could now only hear the deafened sound of the regular movement of feet in the procession, while flowers by the handful still continued to fall silently upon the pavement. Very soon there were heaps of them.

But now, reassured upon the good order of the laymen, the Abbé Cornille grew impatient and disturbed, inasmuch as the procession had been stationary for nearly two minutes, and he walked quickly towards the head of it, bowing and smiling at the Huberts as he passed.

‘What has happened? What can prevent them from continuing?’ said Angelique, all feverish from excitement, as if she were waiting for some expected happiness that was to come to her from the other end that was still in the church.

Hubertine answered her gently, as usual :

‘There is no reason why they should run.’

‘There is some obstruction evidently ; perhaps it is a *reposoir* that is still unfinished,’ Hubert added.

The young girls of the Society of the Blessed Virgin, the ‘daughters of Mary’ as they are called, had already commenced singing a canticle, and their clear voices rose in the air, pure as crystal. Nearer and nearer the double ranks caught the movement and recommenced their march.

CHAPTER X

AFTER the civilians, the clergy began to leave the church, the lower orders coming first. All, in surplices, covered their heads with their caps, under the porch; and each one held a large, lighted wax taper; those at the right in their right hand, and those at the left in their left hand, outside the rank, so there was a double row of flame, almost deadened by the brightness of the day. First were representatives from the great seminaries, the parishes, and then collegiate churches; then came the beneficed clergymen and clerks of the Cathedral, followed by the canons in white pluvials. In their midst were the choristers, in capes of red silk, who chanted the anthem in full voice, and to whom all the clergy replied in lower notes. The hymn, 'Pange Lingua,' was grandly given. The street was now filled with a rustling of muslin from the flying winged sleeves of the surplices, which seemed pierced all over with tiny stars of pale gold from the flames of the candles.

'Oh!' at last Angelique half sighed, 'there is Saint Agnes!'

She smiled at the saint, borne by four clerks in white surplices, on a platform of white velvet heavily ornamented with lace. Each year it was like a new surprise to her, as she saw her guardian angel thus

brought out from the shadows where she had been growing old for centuries, quite like another person under the brilliant sunshine, as if she were timid and blushing in her robe of long, golden hair. She was really so old, yet still very young, with her small hands, her little, slender feet, her delicate, girlish face, blackened by time.

But Monseigneur was to follow her. Already the swinging of the censers could be heard coming from the depths of the church.

There was a slight murmuring of voices as Angelique repeated :

‘Monseigneur, Monseigneur,’ and with her eyes still upon the saint who was going by, she recalled to mind at this moment the old histories. The noble Marquesses d’Hauteceur delivering Beaumont from the plague, thanks to the intervention of Agnes, then Jean V. and all those of his race coming to kneel before her image, to pay their devotions to the saint, and she seemed to see them all, the lords of the miracle, coming one by one like a line of princes.

A large space had been left empty. Then the chaplain charged with the care of the crozier advanced, holding it erect, the curved part being towards him. Afterward came two censer-bearers, who walked backwards and swung the censers gently from side to side, each one having near him an acolyte charged with the incense-box. There was a little difficulty before they succeeded in passing by one of the divisions of the door the great canopy of royal scarlet velvet, decorated with a heavy fringe of gold. But the delay was short, order was quickly re-established, and the designated officials took the supports in hand. Underneath, between his

deacons of honour, Monseigneur walked, bareheaded, his shoulders covered with a white scarf, the two ends of which enveloped his hands, which bore the Holy Sacrament as high as possible, and without touching it.

Immediately the incense-bearers resumed their places, and the censers sent out in haste, fell back again in unison with the little silvery sound of their chains.

But Angelique started as she thought, where had she ever seen anyone who looked like Monseigneur? She certainly knew his face before, but had never been struck by it as to-day! All heads were bowed in solemn devotion. But she was so uneasy, she simply bent down and looked at him. He was tall, slight, and noble-looking; superb in his physical strength, notwithstanding his sixty years. His eyes were piercing as those of an eagle; his nose, a little prominent, only seemed to increase the sovereign authority of his face, which was somewhat softened by his white hair, that was thick and curly. She noticed the pallor of his complexion, and it seemed to her as if he suddenly flushed from some unknown reason. Perhaps, however, it was simply a reflection from the great golden-rayed sun which he carried in his covered hands, and which placed him in a radiance of mystic light.

Certainly, he to-day made her think of someone, but of whom? As soon as he left the church, Monseigneur had commenced a psalm, which he recited in a low voice, alternating the verses thereof with his deacons. And Angelique trembled when she saw him turn his eyes towards their window, for he seemed to her so severe, so haughty, and so cold, as if he were condemning the vanity of all earthly affection. He turned his face towards the three bands of ancient embroidery—Mary

and the Angel, Mary at the foot of the Cross, Mary being borne to Heaven—and his face brightened. Then he lowered his eyes and fixed them upon her, but she was so disturbed she could not tell whether his glance was harsh or gentle; at all events it was only for a moment, for quickly regarding the Holy Sacrament, his expression was lost in the light which came from the great golden vessel. The censers still swung back and forth with a measured rhythm, while a little blue cloud mounted in the air.

But Angelique's heart now beat so rapidly she could scarcely keep still. Behind the canopy she had just seen a chaplain, his fingers covered with a scarf, who was carrying the mitre as devoutly as if it were a sacred object, Saint Agnes flying heavenward with the two angels, the work of her hands, and into each stitch of which she had put such deep love. Then, among the laymen who followed, in the midst of functionaries, of officers, of magistrates, she recognised Felicien in the front rank, slight and graceful, with his curly hair, his rather large but straight nose, and his black eyes, the expression of which was at the same time proud and gentle. She expected him; she was not at all surprised to find him transformed into a prince; her heart simply was overflowing with joy. To the anxious look which he gave her, as of imploring forgiveness for his falsehood, she replied by a lovely smile.

'But look!' exclaimed Hubertine, astonished at what she saw, 'is not that the young man who came to our house about the mitre?'

She had also recognised him, and was much disturbed when, turning towards the young girl, she saw the latter transfigured, in ecstasy, avoiding a reply.

‘Then he did not tell us the truth about himself? But why? Do you know the reason? Tell me, my dear, do you know who this young man is?’

Yes, perhaps in reality she did know. An inner voice answered all these questions. But she dared not speak; she was unwilling to ask herself anything. At the right time and at the proper place the truth would be made clear. She thought it was approaching, and felt an increase of pride of spirit, and of great love.

‘But what is it? What has happened?’ asked Hubert, as he bent forward and touched the shoulder of his wife.

He was never present at the moment of an occurrence, but always appeared to come from a reverie to the realisation of what passed about him. When the young man was pointed out to him, he did not recognise him at all.

‘Is it he? I think not. No, you must be mistaken; it is not he.’

Then Hubertine acknowledged that she was not quite sure. At all events, it was as well to talk no more about it, but she would inform herself later on. But the procession, which had stopped again in order that Monseigneur might incense the Holy Sacrament, which was placed among the verdure of a temporary altar at the corner of the street, was now about to move on again; and Angelique, whose hands seemed lost in the basket on her lap, suddenly, in her delight and confusion, made a quick movement, and carelessly threw out a great quantity of the perfumed petals. At that instant Felicien approached. The leaves fell like a little shower, and at last two of them fluttered, balanced themselves, then quietly settled down on his hair.

It was over. The canopy had disappeared round the corner of the Grand Rue, the end of the cortège went by, leaving the pavements deserted, hushed as if quieted by a dreamy faith, in the rather strong exhalation of crushed roses. Yet one could still hear in the distance, growing weaker and weaker by degrees, the silvery sound of the little chains of the swinging censers.

‘Oh mother!’ said Angelique, pleadingly, ‘do let us go into the church, so as to see them all as they come back.’

Hubertine’s first impulse was to refuse. But she, for her own part, was very anxious to ascertain what she could about Felicien, so she replied:

‘Yes, after a while, if you really wish to do so.’

But they must, of course, wait a little. Angelique, after going to her room for her hat, could not keep still. She returned every minute to the great window, which was still wide open. She looked to the end of the street inquiringly, then she lifted her eyes as if seeking something in space itself; and so nervous was she that she spoke aloud, as she mentally followed the procession step by step.

‘Now they are going down the Rue Basse. Ah! see, they must be turning on the square before the Sous Prefecture. There is no end to all the long streets in Beaumont-la-Ville. What pleasure can they take in seeing Saint Agnes, I would like to know. All these petty tradesmen!’

Above them, in the heavens, was a delicately rose-tinted cloud, with a band of white and gold around it, and it seemed as if from it there came a devotional peace and a hush of religious expectation. In the immobility of the air one realised that all civil life was suspended,

as if God had left His house, and everyone was awaiting His return before resuming their daily occupations. Opposite them the blue draperies of the silversmith, and the red curtains of the wax-chandler, still barred the interior of their shops and hid the contents from view. The streets seemed empty; there was no reverberation from one to the other, except that of the slow march of the clergy, whose progress could easily be realised from every corner of the town.

‘Mother! mother! I assure you that now they are at the corner of the Rue Magloire. They will soon come up the hill.’

She was mistaken, for it was only half-past six, and the procession never came back before a quarter-past seven. She would have known well, had she not been over-impatient, that the canopy must be only at the lower wharf of the Ligneul. But she was too excited to think.

‘Oh! mother dear! *do* let us hurry, or we may not find any places.’

‘Come, make haste then, little one,’ at last Hubertine said, smiling in spite of herself. ‘We shall certainly be obliged to wait a great while, but never mind.’

‘As for me, I will remain at home,’ said Hubert. ‘I can take down and put away the embroidered panels, and then I will set the table for dinner.’

The church seemed empty to them, as the Blessed Sacrament was no longer there. All the doors were wide open, like those of a house in complete disorder, where one is awaiting the return of the master. Very few persons came in; the great altar alone, a sarcophagus of the severe Romanesque style, glittered as if burn-

ing at the end of the nave, covered as it was with stars from the flame of many candles; all the rest of the enormous building—the aisles, the chapels, and the arches—seemed filled with shadow under the coming-on of the evening darkness.

Slowly, in order to gain a little patience, Angelique and Hubertine walked round the edifice. Low down, it seemed as if crushed, thickset columns supported the semicircular arches of the side-aisles. They walked the whole length of the dark chapels, which were buried almost as if they were crypts. Then, when they crossed over, before the great entrance portal, under the triforium of the organ, they had a feeling of deliverance as they raised their eyes towards the high, Gothic windows of the nave, which shot up so gracefully above the heavy Romanesque coursed work. But they continued by the southern side-aisle, and the feeling of suffocation returned again. At the cross of the transept four enormous pillars made the four corners, and rose to a great height, then struck off to support the roof. There was still to be found a delicate purple-tinted light, the farewell of day, through the rose windows of the side fronts. They had crossed the three steps which led to the choir, then they turned by the circumference of the apse, which was the very oldest part of the building, and seemed most sepulchral. They stopped one moment and leaned against the ancient grating, which entirely surrounded the choir, and which was most elaborately wrought, that they might look at the flaming altar, where each separate light was reflected in the old polished oak of the stalls, most marvellous stalls, covered with rare sculptures. So at last they came back to the point from which they started, lifting up their heads as

if they breathed more freely from the heights of the nave, which the growing shades at night drove farther away, and enlarged the old walls, on which were faint remains of paintings and of gold.

‘I know perfectly well that we are altogether too early,’ said Hubertine.

Angelique, without replying, said, as if to herself:

‘How grand it is!’

It really seemed to her as if she had never known the church before, but that she had just seen it for the first time. Her eyes wandered over the motionless sea of chairs, then went to the depth of the chapels, where she could only imagine were tombs and old funereal stones, on account of the increased darkness therein. But she saw at last the Chapel Hautecœur, where she recognised the window which had been repaired, with its Saint George, that now looked vague as a dream, in the dusk. She was unusually happy.

At last there was a gentle shaking through the whole building, and the great clock struck. Then the bell began to ring.

‘Ah! now,’ she said, ‘look, for they are really coming up the Rue Magloire.’

This time it was indeed so. A crowd invaded the church, the aisles were soon filled, and one realised that each minute the procession approached nearer and nearer. The noise increased with the pealing of the bells, with a certain rushing movement of air by the great entrance, the portal of which was wide open.

Angelique, leaning on Hubertine’s shoulder, made herself as tall as possible by standing upon the points of her feet, as she looked towards this arched open space,

the roundness of whose top was perfectly defined in the pale twilight of the Place du Cloître. The first to appear was, of course, the bearer of the Cross, accompanied by his two acolytes with their candelabra; and behind them the Master of the Ceremonies hurried along—the good Abbé Cornille, who now seemed quite out of breath and overcome by fatigue. At the threshold of the door, the silhouette of each new arrival was thrown out for a second, clear and strong, then passed quickly away in the darkness of the interior. There were the laymen, the schools, the associations, the fraternities, whose banners, like sails, wavered for an instant, then suddenly vanished in the shade. One saw again the pale ‘daughters of Mary,’ who, as they entered, still sang with their voices like those of seraphim.

The Cathedral had room for all. The nave was slowly filled, the men being at the right and the women at the left. But night had come. The whole place outside was dotted with bright points, hundreds of moving lights, and soon it was the turn for the clergy, the tapers that were held outside the ranks making a double yellow cord as they passed through the door. The tapers seemed endless as they succeeded each other and multiplied themselves; the great seminary, the parishes, and the Cathedral; the choristers still singing the anthem, and the canons in their white pluvials. Then little by little the church became lighted up, seemed inhabited, illuminated, overpowered by hundreds of stars, like a summer sky.

Two chairs being unoccupied, Angelique stood upon one of them.

‘Get down, my dear,’ whispered Hubertine, ‘for that is forbidden.’

But she tranquilly remained there, and did not move.

‘Why is it forbidden? I must see, at all events. Oh! how exquisite all this is!’

At last she prevailed upon her mother to get upon the other chair.

Now the whole Cathedral was glowing with a reddish yellow light. This billow of candles which crossed it illuminated the lower arches of the side-aisles, the depth of the chapels, and glittered upon the glass of some shrine or upon the gold of some tabernacle. The rays even penetrated into the apse, and the sepulchral crypts were brightened up by them. The choir was a mass of flame, with its altar on fire, its glistening stalls, and its old railing, whose ornamentation stood out boldly. And the flight of the nave was stronger marked than ever, with the heavy curved pillars below, supporting the round arches, while above, the numbers of little columns grew smaller and smaller as they burst forth among the broken arches of the ogives, like an inexpressible declaration of faith and love which seemed to come from the lights. In the centre, under the roof, along the ribs of the nave, there was a yellow cloud, a thick odour of wax, from the multitude of little tapers.

But now, above the sound of feet and the moving of chairs, one heard again the falling of the chains of the censers. Then the organ pealed forth majestically, a glorious burst of music that filled to overflowing the highest arches as if with the rumbling of thunder. It was at this instant that Monseigneur arrived on the Place du Cloître. The statue of Saint Agnes had reached the apse, still borne by the surpliced clerks, and her face looked very calm under the light, as if she were

more than happy to return to her dreams of four centuries. At last, preceded by the crosier, and followed by the mitre, Monseigneur entered with his deacons under the canopy, still having his two hands covered with a white scarf, and holding the Blessed Sacrament in the same position as at first. The canopy, which was borne down the central aisle, was stopped at the railing of the choir, and there, on account of a certain unavoidable confusion, the Bishop was for a moment made to approach the persons who formed his suite. Since Felicien had reappeared, Angelique had looked at him constantly. It so happened that on account of the pressure he was placed a little at the right of the canopy, and at that moment she saw very near together the white head of Monseigneur and the blonde head of the young man. That glance was a revelation ; a sudden light came to her eyes ; she joined her hands together as she said aloud :

‘ Oh ! Monseigneur, the son of Monseigneur ! ’

Her secret escaped her. It was an involuntary cry, the certainty which revealed itself in this sudden fact of their resemblance. Perhaps, in the depths of her mind, she already knew it, but she would never have dared to have said so ; whilst now it was self-evident, a fact of which there could be no denial. From everything around her, from her own soul, from inanimate objects, from past recollections, her cry seemed repeated.

Hubertine, quite overcome, said in a whisper, ‘ This young man the son of Monseigneur ? ’

Around these two the crowd had gradually accumulated. They were well known and were greatly admired ; the mother still adorable in her simple toilette of linen, the daughter with the angelic grace of a cheru-

bim, in her gown of white foulard, as light as a feather. They were so handsome and in such full view, as they stood upon their chairs, that from every direction eyes were turned towards them, and admiring glances given them.

‘But yes, indeed, my good lady,’ said the *mère* Lemballeuse, who chanced to be in the group; ‘but yes, he is the son of Monseigneur. But how does it happen that you have not already heard of it? And not only that, but he is a wonderfully handsome young man, and so rich! Rich! yes indeed, he could buy the whole town if he wished to do so. He has millions and millions!’

Hubertine turned very pale as she listened.

‘You must have heard his history spoken of?’ continued the beggar-woman. ‘His mother died soon after his birth, and it was on that account that Monseigneur concluded to become a clergyman. Now, however, after all these years, he sent for his son to join him. He is, in fact, Felicien VII. d’Hauteceur, with a title as if he were a real prince.

Then Hubertine was intensely grieved. But Angélique beamed with joy before the commencement of the realisation of her dream. She was not in the slightest degree astonished, for she had always known that he would be the richest, the noblest, and the handsomest of men. So her joy was intense and perfect, without the slightest anxiety for the future, or suspicion of any obstacle that could possibly come between them. In short, he would in his turn now make himself known, and would tell everything. As she had fancied, gold would stream down with the little flickering flames of the candles. The organs would send forth their most glorious music on the occasion of their betrothal. The

line of the Hauteceurs would continue royally from the beginning of the legend—Norbert I., Jean V., Felicien III., Jean XII., then the last, Felicien VII., who just turned towards her his noble face. He was the descendant of the cousins of the Virgin, the master, the superb son, showing himself in all his beauty at the side of his father.

Just then Felicien smiled sweetly at her, and she did not see the angry look of Monseigneur, who had remarked her standing on the chair, above the crowd, blushing in her pride and love.

‘Oh, my poor dear child!’ sighed Hubertine.

But the chaplain and the acolytes were ranged on the right and the left, and the first deacon having taken the Holy Sacrament from the hands of Monseigneur, he placed it on the altar. It was the final Benediction—the *Tantum ergo* sung loudly by the choristers, the incenses of the boxes burning in the censers, the strange, brusque silence during the prayer—and in the midst of the lighted church, overflowing with clergy and with people, under the high, springing arches, Monseigneur remounted to the altar, took again in his two hands the great golden sun, which he waved back and forth in the air three times, with a slow sign of the Cross.

CHAPTER XI

THAT same evening, on returning from church, Angelique thought to herself, 'I shall see him again very soon, for he will certainly be in the Clos-Marie, and I will go there to meet him.'

Without having exchanged a word with each other, they appeared to have silently arranged this interview. The family dined as usual in the kitchen, but it was eight o'clock before they were seated at the table. Hubert, quite excited by this day of recreation and of fête, was the only one who had anything to say. Hubertine, unusually quiet, scarcely replied to her husband, but kept her looks fixed upon the young girl, who ate heartily and with a good appetite, although she scarcely seemed to pay any attention to the food, or to know that she put her fork to her mouth, so absorbed was she by her fancies. And under this candid forehead, as under the crystal of the purest water, Hubertine read her thoughts clearly, and followed them as they formed themselves in her mind one by one.

At nine o'clock they were greatly surprised by a ringing of the door-bell. It proved to be the Abbé Cornille, who, notwithstanding his great fatigue, had come to tell them that Monseigneur the Bishop had greatly admired the three old panels of marvellous embroidery.

‘Yes, indeed! and he spoke of them so enthusiastically to me that I was sure it would please you to know it.’

Angelique, who had roused up on hearing the name of Monseigneur, fell back again into her reveries as soon as the conversation turned to the procession. Then after a few minutes she got up.

‘But where are you going, dear?’ asked Hubertine.

This question startled her, as if she herself knew not why she had left her seat.

‘I am going upstairs, mother, for I am very tired.’

In spite of this plausible excuse, Hubertine imagined the true reason that influenced her. It was the need of being by herself, the haste of communing alone with her great happiness.

When she held her in her arms pressed against her breast, she felt that she was trembling. She almost seemed to avoid her usual evening kiss. Looking anxiously in her face, Hubertine read in her eyes the feverish expectation connected with the hoped-for meeting. It was all so evident to her that she promised herself to keep a close watch.

‘Be good, dear, and sleep well.’

But already, after a hurried good-night to Hubert and to the Abbé Cornille, Angelique was halfway up the stairs, quite disturbed, as she realised that her secret had almost escaped her. Had her mother held her against her heart one second longer, she would have told her everything. When she had shut herself in her own room, and doubly locked her door, the light troubled her, and she blew out her candle. The moon, which rose later and later, had not yet appeared above the horizon, and the night was very dark. Without un-

dressing, she seated herself before the open window, looked out into the deep shade, and waited patiently for the hours to pass. The minutes went by rapidly, as she was fully occupied with the one idea that as soon as the clock struck for midnight she would go down to find Felicien. As it would be the most natural thing in the world to do, she traced out her way, step by step, and every movement she would make with the most perfect composure.

It was not very late when she heard the Abbé Cornille take his leave. Soon after, the Huberts, in their turn, came upstairs. Then it seemed to her as if someone came out of their chamber, and with furtive steps moved cautiously as far as the foot of the stairway, then stopped, as if listening for a moment before returning. Then the house soon sank, as if in the quiet of a deep sleep.

When the great church clock struck twelve, Angelique left her seat. 'Now I must go, for he is waiting for me.' She unlocked the door, and, passing out, neglected closing it after her. Going down the first flight of stairs, she stopped as she approached the room of the Huberts, but heard nothing—nothing but the indefinable quivering of silence. Moreover, she was neither in a hurry, nor had she any fear, for being totally unconscious of any wrong intentions, she felt at perfect ease. It would have been quite impossible for her not to have gone down. An inward power directed and led her, and it all seemed so simple and right; she would have smiled at the idea of a hidden danger. Once in the lower rooms, she passed through the kitchen to go out into the garden, and again forgot to fasten the shutters. Then she walked rapidly towards the little

gate of the Clos-Marie, which she also left wide open after her. Notwithstanding the obscurity and the dense shadows in the field, she did not hesitate an instant, but went direct to the little plank which served as a bridge to the Chevrotte, crossed it, guiding herself by feeling the way, as if in a familiar place, where every tree and bush were well known to her. Turning to the right, under a great willow-tree, she had only to put out her hands to have them earnestly grasped by Felicien, whom she knew would be there in waiting for her.

For a minute, without speaking, Angelique pressed Felicien's hands in hers. They could not see each other, for the sky was covered with a misty cloud of heat, and the pale moon, which had just risen, had not yet lighted it up. At length she spoke in the darkness, her heart filled to overflowing with her great happiness :

‘Oh, my dear seigneur, how I love you, and how grateful I am to you!’

She laughed aloud at the realisation of the fact that at last she knew him ; she thanked him for being younger, more beautiful, and richer even than she had expected him to be. Her gaiety was charming ; it was a cry of astonishment and of gratitude before this present of love, this fulfilment of her dreams.

‘You are the king. You are my master ; and lo ! here am I, your slave. I belong to you henceforth, and my only regret is that I am of so little worth. But I am proud of being yours ; it is sufficient for you to love me, and that I may be in my turn a queen. It was indeed well that I knew you were to come, and so waited for you ; my heart is overflowing with joy since finding that you are so great, so far above me. Ah !

my dear seigneur, how I thank you, and how I love you.'

Gently he put his arm around her as he said :

'Come and see where I live.'

He made her cross the Clos-Marie, among the wild grass and herbs, and then she understood for the first time in what way he had come every night into the field from the park of the Bishop's Palace. It was through an old gate, that had been unused for a long time, and which this evening he had left half open. Taking Angelique's hand, he led her in that way into the great garden of the Monseigneur.

The rising moon was half-hidden in the sky, under a veil of warm mist, and its rays fell down upon them with a white, mysterious light. There were no stars visible, but the whole vault of heaven was filled with a dim lustre, which quietly penetrated everything in this serene night. Slowly they walked along on the borders of the Chevrotte, which crossed the park ; but it was no longer the rapid rivulet rushing over a pebbly descent—it was a quiet, languid brook, gliding along through clumps of trees. Under this mass of luminous vapour, between the bushes which seemed to bathe and float therein, it was like an Elysian stream which unfolded itself before them.

Angelique soon resumed her gay chattering.

'I am so proud and so happy to be here on your arm.'

Felicien, touched by such artless, frank simplicity, listened with delight as she talked unrestrainedly, concealing nothing, but telling all her inmost thoughts, as she opened her heart to him. Why should she even think of keeping anything back ? She had never harmed anyone, so she had only good things to say.

‘Ah, my dear child, it is I who ought to be exceedingly grateful to you, inasmuch as you are willing to love me a little in so sweet a way. Tell me once more how much you love me. Tell me exactly what you thought when you found out at last who I really was.’

But with a pretty, impatient movement she interrupted him.

‘No, no; let us talk of you, only of you. Am I really of any consequence? At all events, what matters it who I am or what I think! For the moment you are the only one of importance.’

And keeping as near him as possible, going more slowly along the sides of the enchanted river, she questioned him incessantly, wishing to learn everything about him, of his childhood, his youth, and the twenty years he had passed away from his father. ‘I already know that your mother died when you were an infant, and that you grew up under the care of an uncle who is a clergyman. I also know that Monseigneur refused to see you again.’

Then Felicien answered, speaking in a very low tone, with a voice that seemed as if it came from the far-away past:

‘Yes, my father idolised my mother, and it seemed to him as if I were guilty, since my birth had cost her her life. My uncle brought me up in entire ignorance of my family, harshly too, as if I had been a poor child confided to his care. I had no idea of my true position until very recently. It is scarcely two years, in fact, since it was revealed to me. But I was not at all surprised in hearing the truth; it seemed as if I had always half-realised that a great fortune belonged to me. All regular work wearied me; I was good for nothing

except to run about the fields and amuse myself. At last I took a great fancy for the painted windows of our little church.' Angelique interrupted him by laughing gaily, and he joined her in her mirth for a moment.

'I became a workman like yourself. I had fully decided to earn my living by painting on glass, and was studying for that purpose, when all this fortune poured down upon me. My father was intensely disappointed when my uncle wrote him that I was a good-for-nothing fellow, and that I would never consent to enter into the service of the Church. It had been his expressed wish that I should become a clergyman; perhaps he had an idea that in so doing I could atone for the death of my mother. He became, however, reconciled at last, and wished for me to be here and remain near him. Ah! how good it is to live, simply to live,' he exclaimed. 'Yes, to live to love, and to be loved in return.'

This trembling cry, which resounded in the clear night air, vibrated with the earnest feeling of his healthy youth. It was full of passion, of sympathy for his dead mother, and of the intense ardour he had thrown into this, his first love, born of mystery. It filled all his spirit, his beauty, his loyalty, his ignorance, and his earnest desire of life.

'Like you,' he continued, 'I was, indeed, expecting the unknown, and the evening when you first appeared at the window I also recognised you at once. Tell me all that you have ever thought, and what you were in the habit of doing in the days that have passed.' But again she refused, saying gently :

'No; speak only of yourself. I am eager to know every petty incident of your life, so please keep nothing

back. In that way I shall realise that you belong to me, and that I love you in the past as well as in the present.'

She never would have been fatigued in listening to him as he talked of his life, but was in a state of joyous ecstasy in thus becoming thoroughly acquainted with him, adoring him like a little child at the feet of some saint. Neither of them wearied of repeating the same things: how much they loved each other and how dearly they were beloved in return. The same words returned constantly to their lips, but they always seemed new, as they assumed unforeseen, immeasurable depths of meaning. Their happiness increased as they thus made known the secrets of their hearts, and lingered over the music of the words that passed their lips. He confessed to her the charm her voice had always been to him, so much so that as soon as he heard it he became at once her devoted slave. She acknowledged the delicious fear she always had at seeing his pale face flush at the slightest anger or displeasure.

They had now left the misty banks of the Chevrotte, and arm-in-arm they entered under the shadows of the great elm-trees.

'Oh! this beautiful garden,' whispered Angelique, happy to breathe in the freshness which fell from the trees. 'For years I have wished to enter it; and now I am here with you—yes, I am here.'

It did not occur to her to ask him where he was leading her, but she gave herself up to his guidance, under the darkness of these centenarian trees. The ground was soft under their feet; the archway of leaves above them was high, like the vaulted ceiling of a

church. There was neither sound nor breath, only the beating of their own hearts.

At length he pushed open the door of a little pavilion, and said to her : ' Go in ; this is my home.'

It was there that his father had seen fit to instal him all by himself, in this distant corner of the park. On the first floor there was a hall, and one very large room, which was now lighted by a great lamp. Above was a complete little apartment.

' You can see for yourself,' he continued smilingly, ' that you are at the house of an artisan. This is my shop.'

It was a working-room indeed ; the caprice of a wealthy young man, who amused himself in his leisure hours by painting on glass. He had re-found the ancient methods of the thirteenth century, so that he could fancy himself as being one of the primitive glass-workers, producing masterpieces with the poor, unfinished means of the older time. An ancient table answered all his purposes. It was coated with moist, powdered chalk, upon which he drew his designs in red, and where he cut the panes with heated irons, disdaining the modern use of a diamond point. The muffle, a little furnace made after the fashion of an old model, was just now quite heated ; the baking of some picture was going on, which was to be used in repairing another stained window in the Cathedral ; and in cases on every side were glasses of all colours which he had ordered to be made expressly for him, in blue, yellow, green, and red, in many lighter tints, marbled, smoked, shaded, pearl-coloured, and black. But the walls of the room were hung with admirable stuffs, and the working materials disappeared in the midst of a marvellous

luxury of furniture. In one corner, on an old tabernacle which served as a pedestal, a great gilded statue of the Blessed Virgin seemed to smile upon them.

‘So you can work—you really can work,’ repeated Angelique with childish joy.

She was very much amused with the little furnace, and insisted upon it that he should explain to her everything connected with his labour. Why he contented himself with the examples of the old masters, who used glass coloured in the making, which he shaded simply with black; the reason he limited himself to little, distinct figures, to the gestures and draperies of which he gave a decided character; his ideas upon the art of the glass-workers, which in reality declined as soon as they began to design better, to paint, and to enamel it; and his final opinion that a stained-glass window should be simply a transparent mosaic, in which the brightest colours should be arranged in the most harmonious order, so as to make a delicate, shaded bouquet. But at this moment little did she care for the art in itself. These things had but one interest for her now—that they were connected with him, that they seemed to bring her nearer to him and to strengthen the tie between them.

‘Oh!’ she exclaimed, ‘how happy we shall be together. You will paint, while I embroider.’

He had just retaken her hands, in the centre of this great room, in the luxury of which she was quite at her ease, as it seemed to be her natural surrounding, where her grace would be fully developed. Both of them remained silent for a moment. Then she was, as usual, the first to speak.

‘Now everything is decided upon, is it not?’

‘What?’ he smilingly asked, ‘what do you mean?’

‘Our marriage.’

He hesitated an instant. His face, which had been very pale, flushed quickly. She was disturbed at such a change.

‘Have I made you angry in any way?’

But he had already conquered himself, and pressed her hands tenderly, with a grasp that seemed to cover everything.

‘Yes, it is decided upon, and it is sufficient for you to wish for a thing that it should be done, no matter how many obstacles may oppose it. Henceforward my one great desire in life will be to obey you.’

Then her face beamed with perfect happiness and delight.

She did not have a single doubt. All seemed to her quite natural, to be so well-arranged that it could be finished on the morrow with the same ease as in many of the miracles of the ‘Golden Legend.’ The idea never occurred to her that there could be the slightest hindrance or the least delay. Since they really loved each other, why should they be any longer separated? It was the most simple thing in the world for two persons who loved each other to be married. She was so secure in her happiness that she was perfectly calm.

‘Since it is agreed upon,’ she said jokingly, ‘give me your hand.’

He took her little hand and kissed it, as he said:

‘It is all arranged.’

She then hastened to go away, in the fear of being surprised by the dawn, and also impatient to relieve her mind of her secret. He wished to accompany her.

‘No, no,’ she replied. ‘We should not get back before daylight. I can easily find the way. Good-bye until to-morrow.’

‘Until to-morrow, then.’

Felicien obeyed, and watched Angelique as she ran, first under the shady elms, then along the banks of the Chevrotte, which were now bathed in light. Soon she closed the gate of the park, then darted across the Clos-Marie, through the high grass. While on her way, she thought it would be impossible to wait until sunrise, but that she would rap at the door of the Huberts’ room as soon as she reached home, that she might wake them up and tell them everything. She was in such an expansion of happiness, such a turmoil of sincerity, that she realised she was incapable of keeping five minutes longer this great secret which had been hers for so long a time. She entered into their garden and closed the gate.

And there, near the Cathedral, Angelique saw Hubertine, who waited for her in the night, seated upon the stone bench, which was surrounded by a small cluster of lilac-bushes. Awakened, warned by some inexpressible feeling, she had gone upstairs, then down again, and on finding all the doors open, that of the chamber as well as that of the house, she had understood what had happened. So, uncertain what it was best to do, or where to go, in the fear lest she might aggravate matters, she sat down anxiously.

Angelique immediately ran to her, without embarrassment, kissed her repeatedly, her heart beating with joy as she laughed merrily at the thought that she had no longer need of hiding anything from her.

‘Oh, mother mine, everything is arranged! We are to be married very soon, and I am so happy.’

Before replying, Hubertine examined her closely. But her fears vanished instantly before the limpid eyes and the pure lips of this exquisite young girl. Yet she was deeply troubled, and great tears rolled down her cheeks.

‘My poor, dear child,’ she whispered, as she had done the previous evening in church.

Astonished to see her in such a way, she who was always so equable, who never wept, Angelique exclaimed:

‘But what is the matter, dear mother? It is, indeed, true that I have not done right, inasmuch as I have not made you my confidante. But you would pardon me if you knew how much I have suffered from it, and how keen my remorse has been. Since at first I did not speak, later on I did not dare to break the silence. Will you forgive me?’

She had seated herself near her mother, and had placed her arm caressingly around her waist. The old bench seemed almost hidden in this moss-covered corner of the Cathedral. Above their heads the lilacs made a little shade, while near them was the bush of eglantine which the young girl had set out in the hope that it might bear roses; but, having been neglected for some time, it simply vegetated, and had returned to its natural state.

‘Mother, let me tell you everything now. Come, listen to me, please.’

CHAPTER XII

THEN, in a low tone, Angelique began her story. She related in a flow of inexhaustible words all that had happened, calling up the most minute details, growing more and more excited at the recollection of them. She omitted nothing, but searched her memory as if it were for a confession. She was not at all embarrassed, although her cheeks grew very red and her eyes sparkled with flashes of pride; yet she did not raise her voice, but continued to talk earnestly in a half-whisper.

At length Hubertine interrupted her, speaking also very low :

‘Ah, my dear ! now you are too excited. You have indeed to correct yourself, for you are carried away by your feelings, as if by a great wind. Ah, my vain, my headstrong child, you are always the same little girl who refused to wash up the kitchen floor, and who kissed her own hands.’

Angelique could not prevent herself from laughing.

‘No, do not laugh. It may be that by-and-by you will not have tears enough to weep. My poor darling, this marriage can never take place.’

Again her gaiety burst out in a long musical laugh.

‘But mother, mother, what are you saying? Do you wish to punish me by teasing me? It is a very simple matter. This evening Felicien is to talk of it with his father. To-morrow he will come to arrange everything with you.’

Could it be true that she believed all this? Hubertine was distressed, and knew not what to do. At last she concluded it was best to be pitiless and tell her; that it would be impossible for a little embroiderer without money and without name to marry Felicien d’Hauteccœur. A young man who was worth so many millions! The last descendant of one of the oldest families of France! No, that could never be.

But at each new obstacle Angelique tranquilly replied: ‘But why not?’ It would be a real scandal, a marriage beyond all ordinary conditions of happiness. Did she hope, then, to contend against all the world? ‘But why not?’ Monseigneur is called very strict and very haughty, proud of his name, and severe in his criticisms in regard to all marks of affection. Could she dare to expect to bend him?

‘But why not?’ And, unshakable in her faith, in her firm, ingenuous manner she said: ‘It is very odd, dear mother, that you should think people all so bad! Especially when I have just assured you that everything is well under way, and is sure to come out all right. Do you not recollect that only two months ago you scolded me, and ridiculed my plans? Yet I was right, and everything that I expected has come to pass.’

‘But, unhappy child, wait for the end!’

Hubertine thought of the past, and was angry with herself, as she now reflected, more bitterly than ever before, that Angelique had been brought up in such

ignorance. Again she predicted to her the hard lessons of the reality of life, and she would have liked to have explained to her some of the cruelties and abominations of the world, but, greatly embarrassed, she could not find the necessary words. What a grief it would be to her if some day she were forced to accuse herself of having brought about the unhappiness of this child, who had been kept alone as a recluse, and allowed to dwell in the continued falsehood of imagination and dreams!

‘Listen to me, dearest. You certainly would not wish to marry this young man against the wish of us all, and without the consent of his father?’

Angelique had grown very serious. She looked her mother in the face, and in a serious tone replied:

‘Why should I not do so? I love him, and he loves me.’

With a pang of anguish, Hubertine took her again in her arms, clasped her tenderly, but convulsively, and looked at her earnestly, but without speaking. The pale moon had disappeared from sight behind the Cathedral, and the flying, misty clouds were now delicately coloured in the heavens by the approach of the dawn. They were both of them enveloped in this purity of the early morn, in the great fresh silence, which was alone disturbed by the little chirping of the just-awakening birds.

‘But alas! my dear child, happiness is only found in obedience and in humility. For one little hour of passion, or of pride, we sometimes are obliged to suffer all our lives. If you wish to be contented on this earth, be submissive, be ready to renounce and give up everything.’

But feeling that she was still rebellious under her embrace, that which she had never said to anyone, that

which she still hesitated to speak of, almost involuntarily escaped from her lips :

‘Listen to me once more, my dear child. You think that we are happy, do you not, your father and I. We should indeed be so had not our lives been embittered by a great vexation.’

She lowered her voice still more, as she related with a trembling breath their history. The marriage without the consent of her mother, the death of their infant, and their vain desire to have another child, which was evidently the punishment of their fault. Still, they adored each other. They had lived by working, had wanted for nothing ; but their regret for the child they had lost was so ever-present that they would have been wretchedly unhappy, would have quarrelled, and perhaps even have been separated, had it not been that her husband was so thoroughly good, while for herself she had always tried to be just and reasonable.

‘Reflect, my daughter. Do not put any stumbling-block in your path which will make you suffer later on. Be humble, obey, check the impulse of your heart as much as possible.’

Subdued at last, Angelique restrained her tears, but grew very pale as she listened, and interrupted her by saying :

‘Mother, you pain me terribly. I love him, and I am sure that he loves me.’

Then she allowed her tears to flow. She was quite overcome by all she had listened to, softened, and with an expression in her eyes as if deeply wounded by the glimpse given her of the probable truth of the case. Yet she could suffer, and would willingly die, if need be, for her love.

Then Hubertine decided to continue.

‘I do not wish to pain you too deeply at once, yet it is absolutely necessary that you should know the whole truth. Last evening, after you had gone upstairs, I had quite a talk with the Abbé Cornille, and he explained to me why Monseigneur, after great hesitation, had at last decided to call his son to Beaumont. One of his greatest troubles was the impetuosity of the young man, the uncontrollable haste which he manifested to plunge into the excitement of life, without listening to the advice of his elders. After having with pain renounced all hope of making him a priest, his father found that he could not establish him in any occupation suitable to his rank and his fortune. He would never be anything but a headstrong fellow, restless, wandering, yielding to his artistic tastes when so inclined. He was alarmed at seeing in his son traits of character like those from which he himself had so cruelly suffered. At last, from fear that he might take some foolish step, and fall in love with someone beneath him in position, he wished to have him here, that he might be married at once.

‘Very well,’ said Angelique, who did not yet understand.

‘Such a marriage had been proposed even before his arrival, and all preliminaries were settled yesterday, so that the Abbé Cornille formally announced that in the autumn Felicien would wed Mademoiselle Claire de Voincourt. You know very well the Hôtel de Voincourt there, close to the Bishop’s Palace. The family are very intimate with Monseigneur. On both sides, nothing better could be hoped for, either in the way of name or of fortune. The Abbé himself highly approves of the union.’

The young girl no longer listened to these reasons

of the fitness of things. Suddenly an image appeared to come before her eyes—that of Claire. She saw her, as she had occasionally had a glimpse of her in the alleys of the Park during the winter, or as she had seen her on fête days in the Cathedral. A tall young lady, a brunette, very handsome, of a much more striking beauty than her own, and with a royal bearing and appearance. Notwithstanding her haughty air, she was said to be very good and kind.

‘So he is to marry this elegant young lady, who is not only beautiful but very rich,’ she murmured.

Then, as if suddenly pierced by a sharp agony, she exclaimed :

‘He uttered a falsehood! He did not tell me this!’

She recollected now the momentary hesitation of Felicien, the rush of blood which had coloured his cheeks when she spoke to him of their marriage. The shock was so great that she turned deadly pale, and her head fell heavily on her mother’s shoulders.

‘My darling, my dear darling! This is, indeed, a cruel thing; I know it well. But it would have been still worse had you waited. Take courage, then, and draw at once the knife from the wound. Repeat to yourself, whenever the thought of this young man comes to you, that never would Monseigneur, the terrible Jean XII., whose intractable pride, it appears, is still recollected by all the world, give his son, the last of his race, to a little embroiderer, found under a gateway and adopted by poor people like ourselves.’

In her weakness, Angelique heard all this without making any objection. What was it she felt pass over her face? A cold breath coming from a distance, from

far above the roofs of the houses, seemed to freeze her blood. Was it true that her mother was telling her of this misery of the world, this sad reality, in the same way that parents relate the story of the wolf to unreasonable children? She would never forget the shock and the grief of this first experience of a bitter disappointment. Yet, however, she already excused Felicien. He had told no falsehood; he simply had been silent. Were his father to wish him to marry this young girl, no doubt he would refuse to do so. But as yet he had not dared to rebel. As he had not said anything to her of the matter, perhaps it was because he had just made up his mind as to what it was best for him to do. Before this sudden vanishing away of her air-castles, pale and weak from the rude touch of the actual life, she still kept her faith, and trusted, in spite of all, in the future realisation of her dream. Eventually the fair promises for the future would come to pass, even although now her pride was crushed and she sank down into a state of humiliation and resignation.

‘Mother, it is true that I have done wrong, but I will never sin again. I promise you that I will be patient, and submit myself without a murmur of revolt to whatever Heaven wishes me to be.’

It was true grace which spoke within her. The trial was great, but she was able to conquer, from the effects of the education she had received and the excellent example of the home life in which she had grown up. Why should she doubt the morrow, when until this present moment everyone near her had been so generous and so tender towards her? She prayed that she might be able to have the wisdom of Catherine, the meekness of Elizabeth, the chastity of Agnes; and

re-comforted by the aid of the saints, she was sure that they alone would help her to triumph over every trouble. Was it not true that her old friends the Cathedral, the Clos-Marie, and the Chevrotte, the little fresh house of the Huberts, the Huberts themselves, all who loved her, would defend her, without her being obliged to do anything, except to be obedient and good?

‘Then, dear child, you promise me that you will never act contrary to our wishes, and above all against those of Monseigneur?’

‘Yes, mother, I promise.’

‘You also promise me not to see this young man again, and no longer to indulge in the foolish idea of marrying him?’

At this question her courage failed her. She almost felt the spirit of rebellion rise again within her, as she thought of the depth of her love. But in a moment she bowed her head and was definitely conquered.

‘I promise to do nothing to bring about a meeting with him, and to take no steps towards our marriage.’

Hubertine, touched to the heart, pressed the young girl most affectionately in her arms as she thanked her for her obedience. Oh! what a dreadful thing it was, when wishing to do good to the child she so tenderly loved, she was forced to make her suffer so intensely. She was exhausted, and rose up hastily, surprised that daylight had come. The little cry of the birds had increased in every direction, although as yet none were to be seen in flight. In the sky the clouds, delicate as gauze, seemed to float away in the limpid blueness of the atmosphere.

Then Angelique, whose look had mechanically fallen

upon her wild rose-bush, at last noticed it with its puny leaves. She smiled sadly as she said :

‘ You were right, mother dear ; it will never be in blossom.’

At seven o’clock in the morning Angelique was at her work as usual. The days followed each other, and every forenoon found her seated before the chasuble she had left on the previous evening. Nothing appeared to be changed outwardly ; she kept strictly her promise, shut herself up, and made no attempt whatever to see Felicien. This did not seem to depress her at all, but she kept her bright, youthful look, smiling sweetly at Hubertine when occasionally she saw her eyes fixed upon her as if astonished. However, in this enforced silence she thought only of him ; he was always in her mind.

Her hope remained firm, and she was sure that in spite of all obstacles everything would come out all right in the end. In fact, it was this feeling of certainty that gave her such an air of courage, of haughty rectitude, and of justice.

Hubert from time to time scolded her.

‘ You are over-doing, my dear ; you are really growing pale. I hope at least that you sleep well at night.’

‘ Oh yes, father ! like a log ! Never in my life did I feel better than now.’

But Hubertine, becoming anxious in her turn, proposed that they should take a little vacation, and said :

‘ If you would like it, my child, we will shut up the house, and we will go, all three of us, to Paris for a while.’

‘ Oh ! mother mine, of what are you thinking ? What would become of all our orders for work ? You

know I am never in better health than when closely occupied.'

In reality, Angelique simply awaited a miracle, some manifestation of the Invisible which would give her to Felicien. In addition to the fact that she had promised to do nothing, what need was there of her striving, since in the beyond some unknown power was always working for her? So, in her voluntary inaction, while feigning indifference, she was continually on the watch, listening to the voices of all that quivered around her, and to the little familiar sounds of this circle in which she lived and which would assuredly help her. Something must eventually come from necessity. As she leaned over her embroidery-frame, not far from the open window, she lost not a trembling of the leaves, not a murmur of the Chevrotte. The slightest sighs from the Cathedral came to her, magnified tenfold by the eagerness of her attention; she even heard the slippers of the beadle as he walked round the altar when putting out the tapers. Again at her side she felt the light touch of mysterious wings; she knew that she was aided by the unknown, and at times she even turned suddenly, thinking that a phantom had whispered in her ear the way of gaining the hoped-for victory. But days passed and no change came.

At night, that she need not break her word, Angelique at first did not go out upon the balcony, for fear of being tempted to rejoin Felicien, were she to see him below her. She remained quietly waiting in her chamber. Then, as the leaves even scarcely stirred, but seemed to sleep, she ventured out, and began to question the dark shadows as before.

From whence would the miracle come? Without

doubt, in the Bishop's garden would be seen a flaming hand, which would beckon to her to approach.

Or, perhaps, the sign would appear in the Cathedral, the great organs of which would peal forth, and would call her to the altar.

Nothing would have surprised her: neither the doves of the 'Golden Legend' bringing the words of benediction, nor the intervention of saints, who would enter through the walls, to tell her that Monseigneur wished to see her. The only thing at which she wondered was the slowness of the working of the marvel. Like the day, the nights succeeded nights, yet nothing, nothing manifested itself.

At the close of the second week, that which astonished Angelique above all was that she had not seen Felicien. She, it was true, had pledged herself to take no steps towards meeting him, yet, without having said so to anyone, she thought he would do all in his power to find her. But the Clos-Marie remained deserted, and he no longer walked among the wild grasses therein. Not once during the past fortnight had she had a glimpse of him by day, or even seen his shadow in the evening. Still her faith remained unshaken; that he did not come was simply that he was occupied in making his preparations to rejoin her. However, as her surprise increased there was at length mingled with it a beginning of anxiety.

At last, one evening the dinner was sad at the embroiderer's, and as soon as it was over Hubert went out, under the pretext of having an important commission to attend to, so Hubertine remained alone with Angelique in the kitchen. She looked at her for a long time with moistened eyes, touched by such courage. During the

past fortnight not one word had been exchanged between them in reference to those things with which their hearts were full, and she was deeply moved by the strength of character and loyalty her daughter displayed in thus keeping her promise. A sudden feeling of deep tenderness made her open her arms, and the young girl threw herself upon her breast, and in silence they clasped each other in a loving embrace.

Then, when Hubertine was able to speak, she said :

‘ Ah ! my poor child, I have been impatient to be alone with you, for you must know that now all is at an end ; yes, quite at an end.’

Startled, Angelique rose quickly, exclaiming :

‘ What ! is Felicien dead ?’

‘ No ! oh no !’

‘ If he will never come again, it is only that he is dead.’

So Hubertine was obliged to explain to her that the day after the procession she had been to see him, and had made him also promise that he would keep away from them until he had the full authorisation of Monseigneur to do otherwise. It was thus a definite leave-taking, for she knew a marriage would be utterly impossible. She had made him almost distracted as she explained to him how wrongly he had done in thus compromising a young, ignorant, confiding child, whom he would not be allowed to make his wife ; and then he had assured her, that if he could not see her again, he would die from grief, rather than be disloyal.

That same evening he confessed everything to his father.

‘ You see, my dear,’ continued Hubertine, ‘ you are

so courageous that I can repeat to you all I know without hesitation. Oh ! if you realised, my darling, how I pity you, and what admiration I have for you since I have found you so strong, so brave in keeping silent and in appearing gay when your heart was heavily burdened. But you will have need of even more firmness ; yes, much more, my dear. This afternoon I have seen the Abbé Cornille, and he gives me no encouragement whatever. Monseigneur refuses to listen to the subject, so there is no more hope.'

She expected a flood of tears, and she was astonished to see her daughter reseal herself tranquilly, although she had turned very pale. The old oaken table had been cleared, and a lamp lighted up this ancient servants' hall, the quiet of which was only disturbed by the humming of the boiler.

'Mother, dear, the end has not yet come. Tell me everything, I beg of you. Have I not a right to know all, since I am the one above all others most deeply interested in the matter?'

And she listened attentively to that which Hubertine thought best to tell her of what she had learned from the Abbé, keeping back only certain details of the life which was as yet an unknown thing to this innocent child.

CHAPTER XIII

SINCE the return of his son to him Monseigneur's days had been full of trouble. After having banished him from his presence almost immediately upon the death of his wife, and remaining without seeing him for twenty years, lo ! he had now come back to him in the plenitude and lustre of youth, the living portrait of the one he had so mourned, with the same delicate grace and beauty. This long exile, this resentment against a child whose life had cost that of the mother, was also an act of prudence. He realised it doubly now, and regretted that he had changed his determination of not seeing him again. Age, twenty years of prayer, his life as clergyman, had not subdued the unregenerate man within him. It was simply necessary that this son of his, this child of the wife he had so adored, should appear with his laughing blue eyes, to make the blood circulate so rapidly in his veins as if it would burst them, as he seemed to think that the dead had been brought to life again. He struck his breast, he sobbed bitterly in penitence, as he remembered that the joys of married life and the ties springing therefrom were prohibited to the priesthood. The good Abbé Cornille had spoken of all this to Hubertine in a low voice and with trembling lips. Mysterious sounds had been heard, and it was whispered

that Monseigneur shut himself up after twilight, and passed nights of combat, of tears and of cries, the violence of which, although partly stifled by the hangings of his room, yet frightened the members of his household. He thought that he had forgotten ; that he had conquered passion ; but it reappeared with the violence of a tempest, reminding him of the terrible man he had been formerly—the bold adventurer, the descendant of brave, legendary chieftains. Each evening on his knees he flayed his skin with haircloth, he tried to banish the phantom of the regretted wife by calling from its coffin the skeleton which must now be there. But she constantly appeared before him, living, in the delicious freshness of youth, such as she was when very young he had first met her and loved her with the devoted affection of maturity. The torture then recommenced as keen and intense as on the day after her death : he mourned her, he longed for her with the same revolt against God Who had taken her from him ; he was unable to calm himself until the break of day, when quite exhausted by contempt of himself and disgust of all the world. Oh ! this passion, this old Adam that he wished to crush in order to re-enter with humility into the sweet peace of Divine love ! When he went out of his room Monseigneur resumed his severe attitude, his expression was calm and haughty, and his face was only slightly pale. The morning when Felicien had made his confession he listened to him without interruption, controlling himself with so great an effort that not a fibre of his body quivered, and he looked earnestly at him, distressed beyond measure to see him, so young, so handsome, so eager, and so like himself in this folly of impetuous love. It was no longer with bitterness, but it was his absolute

will, his hard duty to save his son from the ills which had caused him so much suffering, and he would destroy the passion in his child as he wished to kill it in himself. This romantic history ended by giving him great anxiety. Could it be true that a poor girl—a child without a name, a little embroiderer, first seen under a pale ray of moonlight, had been transfigured into a delicate Virgin of the Legends, and adored with a fervent love as if in a dream? At each new acknowledgment he thought his anger was increased, as his heart beat with such an inordinate emotion, and he redoubled his attempts at self-control, knowing not what cry might come to his lips. He had finished by replying with the single word, ‘Never!’ Then Felicien threw himself on his knees before him, implored him, and pleaded his cause as well as that of Angelique, in the trembling of respect and of terror with which the sight of his father always filled him. Until then he had approached him only with fear. He besought him not to oppose his happiness, without even daring to lift his eyes towards his saintly personage. With a submissive voice he offered to go away, no matter where; to leave all his great fortune to the Church, and to take his wife so far from there that they would never be seen again. He only wished to love and to be loved, unknown. Monseigneur shook from trembling as he repeated severely the word, ‘Never!’ He had pledged himself to the Voincourts, and he would never break his engagement with them. Then Felicien, quite discouraged, realising that he was very angry, went away, fearing lest the rush of blood, which empurpled his cheeks, might make him commit the sacrilege of an open revolt against paternal authority.

‘My child,’ concluded Hubertine, ‘you can easily

understand that you must no longer think of this young man, for you certainly would not wish to act in opposition to the wishes of Monseigneur. I knew that beforehand, but I preferred that the facts should speak for themselves, and that no obstacle should appear to come from me.'

Angelique had listened to all this calmly, with her hands listlessly clasped in her lap. Scarcely had she even dropped her eyelids from time to time, as with fixed looks she saw the scene so vividly described—Felicien at the feet of Monseigneur, speaking of her in an overflow of tenderness. She did not answer immediately, but continued to think seriously, in the dead quiet of the kitchen, where even the little bubbling sound of the water in the boiler was no longer heard. She lowered her eyes and looked at her hands, which, under the lamplight, seemed as if made of beautiful ivory. Then, while the smile of perfect confidence came back to her lips, she said simply :

'If Monseigneur refuses, it is because he waits to know me.'

That night Angelique slept but little. The idea that to see her would enable at once Monseigneur to decide in her favour haunted her. There was in it no personal, feminine vanity, but she was under the influence of a deep, intense love, and her true affection for Felicien was so evident, she was sure that when his father realised it he could not be so obstinate as to make them both unhappy. Many times she turned restlessly in her bed as she pictured what would happen. Before her closed eyes Monseigneur constantly passed in his violet-coloured robe. Perhaps it was, indeed, through him, and by him, that the expected miracle was to

appear. The warm night was sleeping without, and she eagerly listened for the voices, trying to know what the trees, the Chevrotte, the Cathedral, her chamber itself, peopled with such friendly shadows, advised her to do. But there was only an indistinct humming, and nothing precise came to her. It seemed, however, as if mysterious whispers encouraged her to persevere. At last she grew impatient of these too slow certitudes, and as she fell asleep she surprised herself by saying :

‘To-morrow I will speak to Monseigneur.’

When she awoke, her proposed plan seemed not only quite natural but necessary. It was ingenuous and brave ; born of a proud and great purity.

She knew that at five o'clock on every Saturday afternoon Monseigneur went to kneel in the Chapel Hauteceur, where he liked to pray alone, giving himself up entirely to the past of his race and to himself, seeking a solitude which was respected by all connected with the Cathedral. As it fortunately happened, this was a Saturday. She quickly came to a decision. At the Bishop's Palace, not only would she be apt to find it difficult to be received, but, on the other hand, there were always so many people about she would be ill at ease ; whilst it would be so simple to await him in the chapel, and to introduce herself to Monseigneur as soon as he appeared. That day she embroidered with her usual application and composure. Firm in her wish, sure of doing the right thing, she had no impatient fever of expectation. When it was four o'clock she spoke of going to see the *mère* Gabet, and went out, dressed as for an ordinary walk, wearing her little garden-hat tied carelessly under her chin. She turned to the left, and pushing open the linted, stuffed door of the

portal of Saint Agnes, let it fall back heavily behind her.

The church was empty; alone, the confessional of Saint Joseph was still occupied by a penitent, the edge of whose black dress was just seen as one passed. Angelique, who had been perfectly self-possessed until now, began to tremble as she entered this sacred, cold solitude, where even the little sound of her steps seemed to echo terribly. Why was it that her heart grew so oppressed? She had thought she was quite strong, and the day had passed most peacefully—she was so sure of being right in her desire to be happy. But now that she was ignorant of what might happen she turned pale as if guilty, quite frightened at thinking that she was to see Monseigneur, and that in truth she had come there expressly to speak to him. She went quietly to the Chapel Hautecœur, where she was obliged to remain leaning against the gate.

This chapel was one of the most sunken and dark of the old Romanesque apse. Like a cave hewn in a rock, straight and bare, with the simple nerves of its low, vaulted ceiling, it had but one window, that of stained glass, on which was the Legend of St. George, and in whose panes the red and blue so predominated that they made a lilac-coloured light, as if it were twilight. The altar, in black and white marble, was unornamented, and the whole place, with its picture of the Crucifixion, and its two chandeliers, seemed like a tomb. The walls were covered with commemorative tablets, a collection from top to bottom of stones crumbling from age, on which the deeply-cut inscriptions could still be read.

Almost stifled, Angelique waited, motionless. A

beadle passed, who did not even see her, so closely had she pressed herself against the interior of the iron railing. She still saw the dress of the penitent who was at the confessional near the entrance. Her eyes, gradually accustomed to the half-light, were mechanically fixed upon the inscriptions, the characters of which she ended by deciphering. Certain names struck her, calling back to her memory the legends of the Château d'Hauteceur, of Jean V. le Grand, of Raoul III., and of Hervé VII.

She soon found two others, those of Laurette and of Balbine, which brought tears to her eyes, so nervous was she from trouble and anxiety—Laurette, who fell from a ray of moonlight, on her way to rejoin her betrothed, and Balbine, who died from sudden joy at the return of her husband, whom she thought had been killed in the war. They both of them came back at night and enveloped the Castle with their immense, flowing white robes. Had she not seen them herself the day of their visit to the ruins, as they floated, towards evening, above the towers in the rosy pallor of the dusk? Ah! how willingly she would die as they did, although but sixteen years of age, in the supreme happiness of the realisation of her dream!

A loud noise which reverberated under the arches made her tremble. It was the priest who came out from the confessional of Saint Joseph and shut the door after him. She was surprised at no longer seeing the penitent, who had already gone. And when in his turn the clergyman went out by way of the sacristy, she realised that she was absolutely alone in the vast solitude of the Cathedral. At the loud sound of the door of the confessional, as it creaked on its hinges, she thought

that Monseigneur was coming. It was nearly half an hour since she had expected him, yet she did not realise it, for her excitement prevented her from taking any note of time.

Soon a new name drew her eyes towards the tablets—Felicien III., who went to Palestine, carrying a candle in his hand, to fulfil a vow of Philippe le Bel. And her heart beat with pride as she saw before her, mentally, the youthful Felicien VII., the descendant of all these worthies, the fair-haired nobleman whom she adored, and by whom she was so tenderly loved. She suddenly became filled with pride and fear. Was it possible that she herself was there, in the expectation of bringing about a prodigy? Opposite her there was a fresher plaque of marble, dating from the last century, the black letters upon which she could easily read. Norbert Louis Ogier, Marquis d'Hauteœur, Prince of Mirande and of Rouvres, Count of Ferrières, of Montégu and of Saint Marc, and also of Villemareuil, Chevalier of the four Royal Orders of Saint Esprit, Saint Michel, Notre Dame de Carmel and Saint Louis, Lieutenant in the Army of the King, Governor of Normandy, holding office as Captain-General of the Hunting, and Master of the Hounds. All these were the titles of Felicien's grandfather, and yet she had come, so simple, with her working-dress and her fingers worn by the needle, in hopes of marrying the grandson of this dead dignitary!

There was a slight sound, scarcely a rustling, on the flagstones. She turned and saw Monseigneur, and remained motionless at this silent approach without the pomp and surroundings she had vaguely expected. He entered into the chapel, tall, erect, and noble-looking, dressed in purple, with his pale face, his rather large

nose, and his superb eyes, which still seemed youthful in their expression. At first he did not notice her against the black gate. Then, as he was about to kneel down, he saw her before him at his feet.

With trembling limbs, overcome by respect and fear, Angelique had fallen upon her knees. He seemed to her at this moment like the Eternal Father, terrible in aspect and absolute master of her destiny. But her heart was still courageous, and she spoke at once.

‘Oh! Monseigneur, I have come——’

As for the Bishop, he had risen immediately. He had a vague recollection of her; the young girl, seen first at her window on the day of the procession, and re-found a little later standing on a chair in the church; this little embroiderer, with whom his son was so desperately in love. He uttered no word, he made no gesture. He waited, stern and stiff.

‘Oh! Monseigneur, I have come on purpose that you may see me. You have, it is true, refused to accept me, but you do not know me. And now, here I am. Please look at me before you repel me again. I am the one who loves, and am also beloved, and that is all. Nothing beyond this affection. Nothing but a poor child, found at the door of this church. You see me at your feet, little, weak, and humble. If I trouble you it will be very easy for you to send me away. You have only to lift your little finger to crush me. But think of my tears! Were you to know how I have suffered, you would be compassionate. I wished, Monseigneur, to plead my cause in my turn. I love, and that is why I kneel before you, to tell you so. I am ignorant in many ways; I only know I love. All my strength and all my pride is centred in that fact. Is not that suffi-

cient? It certainly makes one great and good to be able to say that one really loves.'

She continued with sighs, and in broken phrases, to confess everything to him, in an unaffected outpouring of ardent feeling. It was a true affection that thus acknowledged itself. She dared to do so because she was innocent and pure. Little by little she raised her head.

'We love each other, Monseigneur. Without doubt he has already told you how all this came to pass. As for me, I have often asked myself the question without being able to reply to it. But we love each other, and if it is a crime to do so, pardon it, I beseech you, for it came from afar, from everything in short that surrounded us. When I realised that I loved him, it was already too late to prevent it. Now, is it possible to be angry on that account? You can keep him with you, make him marry some other person, but you cannot prevent him from giving me his heart. He will die without me, as I shall if obliged to part from him. When he is not by my side I feel that he is really near me, and that we will never be entirely separated, since we carry each other's life with us. I have only to close my eyes to re-see him when I wish, so firmly is his image impressed on my soul. Our whole natures are thus closely united for life. And could you wish to draw us away from this union? Oh! Monseigneur, it is divine; do not try to prevent us loving each other!'

He looked at her in her simple working-dress, so fresh, so unpretending, and attractive. He listened to her as she repeated the canticle of their love in a voice that both fascinated and troubled him, and which grew stronger by degrees. But as her garden-hat fell upon

her shoulders, her exquisite hair seemed to make a halo around her head of fine gold, and she appeared to him, indeed, like one of those legendary virgins of the old prayer-books, so frail was she, so primitive, so absorbed in her deep feeling of intense and pure affection.

‘Be good, be merciful, Monseigneur. You are the master. Do allow us to be happy!’

She implored him, and finding that he remained unmoved, without speaking, she again bowed down her head.

Oh! this unhappy child at his feet; this odour of youth that came up from the sweet figure thus bent before him! There he saw, as it were again, the beautiful light locks he had so fondly caressed in the days gone by. She, whose memory still distressed him after twenty years of penitence, had the same fresh youthfulness, the same proud expression, and the same lily-like grace. She had re-appeared; it was she herself who now sobbed and besought him to be tender and merciful.

Tears had come to Angelique, yet she continued to outpour her heart.

‘And, Monseigneur, it is not only that I love him, but I also love the nobility of his name, the lustre of his royal fortune. Yes, I know well that being nothing, that having nothing, it seems as if I were only desirous of his money. In a way, it is true it is also for his wealth that I wish to marry him. I tell you this because it is necessary that you should know me thoroughly. Ah! to become rich by him and with him, to owe all my happiness to him, to live in the sweetness and splendour of luxury, to be free in our loving home, and to have no more sorrow, no misery around us! That is my ideal!

Since he has loved me I fancy myself dressed in heavy brocades, as ladies were in olden days; I have on my arms and around my neck strings of pearls and precious stones; I have horses and carriages; groves in which I take long walks, followed by pages. Whenever I think of him my dream recommences, and I say to myself, "This must all come to pass, for it perfects my desire to become a queen." Is it, then, Monseigneur, a bad thing to love him more because he can gratify all my childish wishing by showering down miraculous floods of gold upon me as in fairy-tales?

He saw then that she rose up proudly, with a charming, stately air of a true princess, in spite of her real simplicity. And she was always exactly like the fair maiden of other years, with the same flower-like delicacy, the same tender tears, clear as smiles. A species of intoxication came from her, the warm breath of which mounted to his face—the same shadow of a remembrance which made him at night throw himself on his devotional chair, sobbing so deeply that he disturbed the sacred silence of the Palace. Until three o'clock in the morning of this same day he had contended with himself again, and this long history of love, this story of passion, would only revive and excite his incurable wound. But behind his impassiveness nothing was seen, nothing betrayed his effort at self-control and his attempt to conquer the beating of his heart. Were he to lose his life's blood, drop by drop, no one should see it flow, and he now simply became paler, was silent and immovable.

At last this great persistent silence made Angelique desperate, and she redoubled her prayers.

'I put myself in your hands, Monseigneur. Do



Monseigneur.

with me whatever you think best; but have pity when deciding my fate.'

Still, as he continued silent, he terrified her, and seemed to grow taller than ever as he stood before her in his fearful majesty. The deserted Cathedral, whose aisles were already dark, with its high vaulted arches where the daylight seemed dying, made the agony of this silence still harder to bear. In the chapel, where the commemorative slabs could no longer be seen, there remained only the Bishop in his purple cassock, that now looked black, and his long white face, which alone seemed to have absorbed all the light. She saw his bright eyes fixed upon her with an ever-increasing depth of expression, and shrunk from them, wondering if it were possible that anger made them shine in so strange a way.

'Monseigneur, had I not come to-day, I should have eternally reproached myself for having brought about the unhappiness of us both from my want of courage. Tell me then, oh, tell me that I was right in doing so, and that you will give us your consent!'

What use would there be in discussing the matter with this child? He had already given his son the reasons for his refusal, and that was all-sufficient. That he had not yet spoken was only because he thought he had nothing to say. She, no doubt, understood him, and she seemed to wish to raise herself up that she might be able to kiss his hands. But he threw them behind him violently, and she was startled at seeing his white face become suddenly crimson, from a rush of blood to his head.

'Monseigneur! Monseigneur!'

At last he opened his lips, to say to her just one word, the same he had said to his son:

‘Never!’

And without remaining to pray that day, as was his wont, he left the chapel, and with slow steps soon disappeared behind the pillars of the apse.

Falling on the flagstones, Angelique wept for a long time, sobbing deeply in the great peaceful silence of the empty church.

CHAPTER XIV

THAT same evening in the kitchen, after they left the dinner-table, Angelique confessed everything to Hubert, telling him of her interview with the Bishop, and of the latter's refusal. She was very pale, but not at all excited.

Hubert was quite overcome. What? Could it be possible that his dear child already suffered? That she also had been so deeply wounded in her affections? His eyes were filled with tears from his sympathy with her, as they were both of that excessively sensitive nature that at the least breath they were carried away by their imaginations.

'Ah! my poor darling, why did you not consult me? I would willingly have accompanied you, and perhaps I might have persuaded Monseigneur to yield to your prayers.'

With a look Hubertine stopped him. He was really unreasonable. Was it not much better to seize this occasion to put an end at once to all ideas of a marriage which would be impossible? She took the young girl in her arms, and tenderly kissed her forehead.

'Then, now it is ended, my dear child; all ended?'

Angelique at first did not appear to understand what was said to her. Soon the words returned to her as if from a distance. She looked fixedly before her, seem-

ing anxious to question the empty space, and at last she replied :

‘ Without doubt, mother.’

Indeed, on the morrow she seated herself at the work-frame and embroidered as she was wont to do. She took up her usual routine of daily work, and did not appear to suffer. Moreover, no allusion was made to the past ; she no longer looked from time to time out of the window into the garden, and, gradually losing her paleness, the natural colour came back to her cheeks. The sacrifice appeared to have been accomplished.

Hubert himself thought it was so, and, convinced of the wisdom of Hubertine, did all in his power to keep Felicien at a distance. The latter, not daring to openly revolt against his father, grew feverishly impatient, to such a degree that he almost broke the promise he had made to wait quietly without trying to see Angelique again. He wrote to her, and the letters were intercepted. He even went to the house one morning, but it was Hubert alone who received him. Their explanatory conversation saddened them both to an equal degree, so much did the young man appear to suffer when the embroiderer told him of his daughter’s calmness and her air of forgetfulness. He besought him to be loyal, and to go away, that he might not again throw the child into the fearful trouble of the last few weeks.

Felicien again pledged himself to be patient, but he violently refused to take back his word, for he was still hopeful that he might persuade his father in the end. He could wait ; he would let affairs remain in their present state with the Voincourts, where he dined twice a week, doing so simply to avoid a direct act of open rebellion.

And as he left the house he besought Hubert to explain to Angelique why he had consented to the torment of not seeing her for the moment; he thought only of her, and the sole aim of everything he did was to gain her at last.

When her husband repeated this conversation to her, Hubertine grew very serious. Then, after a short silence, she asked :

‘ Shall you tell our daughter what he asked you to say to her ? ’

‘ I ought to do so. ’

She was again silent, but finally added :

‘ Act according to your conscience. But he is now under a delusion. He will eventually be obliged to yield to his father’s wishes, and then our poor, dear little girl will die in consequence. ’

Hubert, overcome with grief, hesitated. But after contending with himself, he concluded to repeat nothing. Moreover, he became a little reassured each day when his wife called his attention to Angelique’s tranquil appearance.

‘ You see well that the wound is healing. She is learning to forget. ’

But she did not forget; she also was simply waiting. All hope of human aid having died within her, she now had returned to the idea of some wonderful prodigy. There would surely be one, if God wished her to be happy. She had only to give herself up entirely into His hands; she believed that this new trial had been sent to her as a punishment for having attempted to force His will in intruding upon Monseigneur. Without true grace mankind was weak, and incapable of success. Her need of that grace made her humble,

bringing to her as an only hope the aid of the Invisible ; so that she gave up acting for herself, but left everything to the mysterious forces which surrounded her. Each evening at lamplight she recommenced her reading of the 'Golden Legend,' being as delighted with it as when she was a young child. She doubted none of the miracles related therein, being convinced that the power of the Unknown is without limit for the triumph of pure souls.

Just at this time the upholsterer of the Cathedral ordered of the Huberts a panel of the very richest embroidery for the throne of Monseigneur the Bishop. This panel, one yard and a half in width and three yards in length, was to be set in old carved wood, and on it were to be represented two angels of life-size, holding a crown, on which were to be the arms of the Hauteceurs. It was necessary that the embroidery should be in bas-relief, a work which not only required great artistic knowledge, but also needed physical strength, to be well done. When proposed to the Huberts, they at first declined the offer, being not only fearful of fatiguing Angelique, but especially dreading that she would be saddened by the remembrances which would be brought to her mind as she wrought thread after thread during the several weeks. But she insisted upon accepting the command, and every morning applied herself to her task with an extraordinary energy. It seemed as if she found her happiness in tiring herself, and that she needed to be physically exhausted in order to be calm.

So in the old workroom life continued in the same regular way, as if their hearts had not even for a moment beaten more quickly than usual. Whilst Hubert occupied himself with arranging the frames, or

drew the patterns, or stretched or relaxed the materials, Hubertine helped Angelique, both of them having their hands terribly tired and bruised when evening came. For the angels and the ornaments it had been necessary at the beginning to divide each subject into several parts, which were treated separately. In order to perfect the most salient points, Angelique first took spools of coarse unbleached thread, which she re-covered with the strong thread of Brittany in a contrary direction ; and as the need came, making use of a heavy pair of shears, as well as of a roughing-chisel, she modelled these threads, shaped the drapery of the angels, and detached the details of the ornaments. In all this there was a real work of sculpture. At last, when the desired form was obtained, with the aid of Hubertine she threw on masses of gold thread, which she fastened down with little stitches of silk. Thus there was a bas-relief of gold, incomparably soft and bright, shining like a sun in the centre of this dark, smoky room. The old tools were arranged in the same lines as they had been for centuries—the punches, the awls, the mallets, and the hammers ; on the work-frame the little donkey waste-basket and the tinsel, the thimbles and the needles, moved up and down as usual, while in the different corners, where they ended by growing rusty, the diligent, the hand spinning-wheel, and the reel for winding, seemed to sleep in the peaceful quiet which entered through the open window.

Days passed. Angelique broke many needles between morning and evening, so difficult was it to sew down the gold, through the thickness of the waxed threads. To have seen her, one would have said she was so thoroughly absorbed by her hard work that she could

think of nothing else. At nine o'clock she was exhausted by fatigue, and, going to bed, she sank at once into a heavy, dreamless sleep. When her embroidery gave her mind a moment's leisure, she was astonished not to see Felicien. Although she took no step towards seeking him, it seemed to her that he ought to have tried every possible way to come to her. Yet she approved of his wisdom in acting as he did, and would have scolded him had he tried to hasten matters. No doubt he also looked for something supernatural to happen. It was this expectation upon which she now lived, thinking each night that it would certainly come on the morrow. Until now she had never rebelled. Still, at times she lifted up her head inquiringly, as if asking 'What! has nothing yet come to pass?' And then she pricked her finger so deeply that her hand bled, and she was obliged to take the pincers to draw the needle out. When her needle would break with a sharp little sound, as if of glass, she did not even make a movement of impatience.

Hubertine was very anxious on seeing her apply herself so desperately to her work, and as the time for the great washing had come again, she forced her to leave her panel of embroidery, that she might have four good days of active outdoor life in the broad sunlight. The *mère* Gabet, now free from her rheumatism, was able to help at the soaping and rinsing. It was a regular fête in the Clos-Marie, these last August days, in which the weather was splendid, the sky almost cloudless, while a delicious fragrance came up from the Chevrotte, the water of which as it passed under the willows was almost icy cold. The first day Angelique was very gay, as she beat the linen after plunging it

in the stream ; enjoying to the full the river, the elms, the old ruined mill, the wild herbs, and all those friendly surroundings, so filled with pleasant memories. Was it not there she had become acquainted with Felicien, who under the moonlight had at first seemed so mysterious a being, and who, later on, had been so adorably awkward the morning when he ran after the dressing-sacque that was being carried away by the current ? As she rinsed each article, she could not refrain from glancing at the gateway of the Bishop's garden, which until recently had been nailed up. One evening she had passed through it on his arm, and who could tell but he might suddenly now open it and come to take her to the presence of his father ? This hope enchanted her as she applied herself to her work in the midst of the frothy foam that at times almost covered her.

But the next day, as the *mère* Gabet brought the last barrow of linen, which she spread out on the grass with Angelique, she interrupted her interminable chattering upon the gossip of the neighbourhood to say maliciously :

‘By the way, you know that Monseigneur is to marry his son ?’

The young girl, who was just smoothing out a sheet, knelt down in the grass, her strength leaving her all at once, from the rudeness of the shock.

‘Yes, everyone is talking of it. The son of Monseigneur will in the autumn marry Mademoiselle de Voincourt. It seems that everything was decided upon and arranged yesterday.’

She remained on her knees, as a flood of confused ideas passed through her brain, and a strange humming

was in her ears. She was not at all surprised at the news, and she realised it must be true. Her mother had already warned her, so she ought to have been prepared for it. She did not yet even doubt Felicien's love for her, as that was her faith and her strength. But at the present moment, that which weakened her so greatly and excited her to the very depths of her being was the thought that, trembling before the commands of his father, he could at last yield from weariness, and consent to wed one whom he did not love. Then he would be lost to her whom he really adored. Never had she thought such an act on his part possible; but now she saw him obliged by his filial duty and his sense of obedience to make them both unhappy for ever. Still motionless, her eyes fixed upon the little gate, she at last revolted against the facts, feeling as if she must go and shake the bars, force them open with her hands, run to Felicien, and, aiding him by her own courage, persuade him not to yield. She was surprised to hear herself reply to the *mère* Gabet, in the purely mechanical instinct of hiding her trouble :

‘Ah! then he is to marry Mademoiselle Claire. She is not only very beautiful, but it is said she is also very good.’

Certainly, as soon as the old woman went away, she must go and find him. She had waited long enough; she would break her promise of not seeing him as if it were a troublesome obstacle. What right had anyone to separate them in this way? Everything spoke to her of their affection—the Cathedral, the fresh water, and the old elm-trees under which they had been so happy. Since their affection had grown on this spot, it was there that she wished to find him again, to go with him

arm-in-arm far away, so far that no one would ever see them.

‘That is all,’ said at last the *mère* Gabet, as she hung the last napkins on a bush. ‘In two hours they will be dry. Good-night, mademoiselle, as you no longer have need of me.’

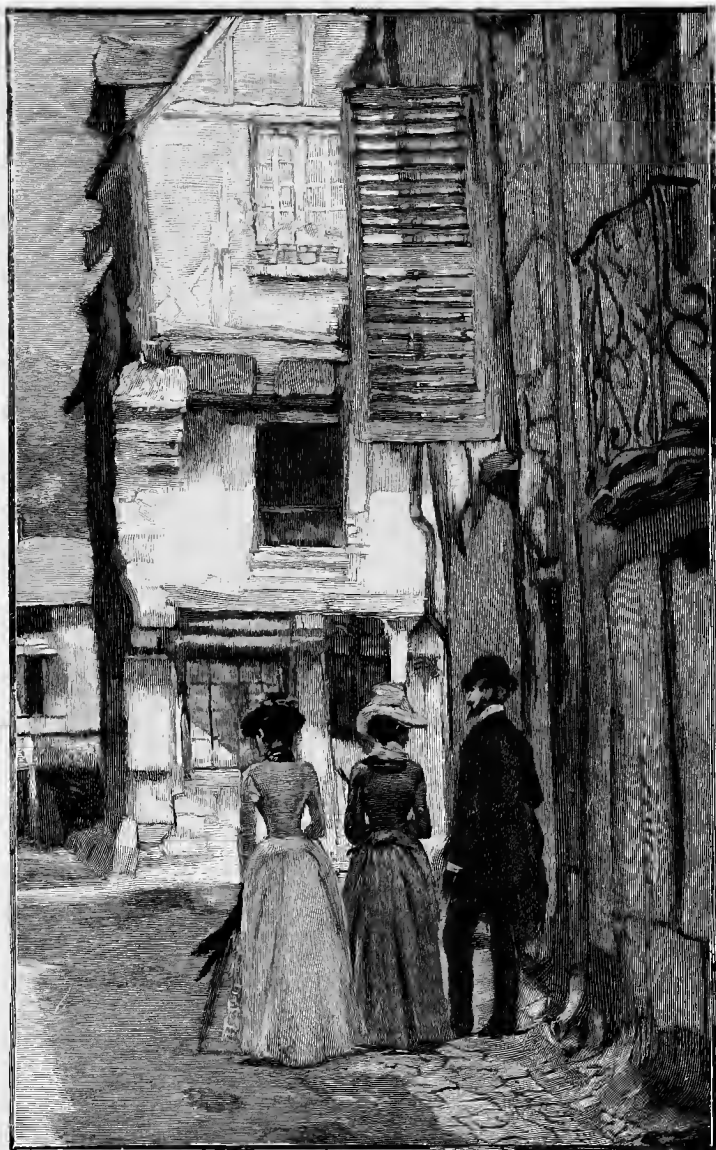
Now, standing in the midst of this efflorescence of linen that shone on the green grass, Angelique thought of that other day, when, in the tempest of wind, among the flapping of the sheets and tablecloths, they unfolded so ingenuously the secrets of their lives to each other. Why had he discontinued his visits to her? Why had he not come to meet her during her healthy exercise of the past three days? But it would not be long before she would run to him, and when he had clasped her in his arms, he would know well that he was hers, and hers only. She would not even need to reproach him for his apparent weakness; it would be enough for her to show herself to make him realise that their happiness was in being together.

He would dare everything for her sake when once she had rejoined him.

An hour passed, and Angelique walked slowly between the pieces of linen, all white herself from the blinding reflection of the sun; and a confused sentiment awoke in her breast, which, growing stronger and stronger, prevented her from going over to the gate, as she had wished to do. She was frightened before this commencement of a struggle. What did it mean? She certainly could act according to her own will. Yet something new, inexplicable, thwarted her and changed the simplicity of her passion. It was such a simple thing to go to a beloved one; yet she could not pos-

sibly do so now, being kept back by a tormenting doubt. Also, since she had given her promise, perhaps it would be wrong to break it. In the evening, when the whole 'wash' was dry, and Hubertine came to help her to take it to the house, she was still undecided what to do, and concluded to reflect upon it during the night. With her arms filled to overflowing with linen, white as snow, and smelling fresh and clean, she cast an anxious look towards the Clos-Marie, already bathed in the twilight, as if it were a friendly corner of Nature refusing to be her accomplice.

In the morning Angelique was greatly troubled when she awoke. Several other nights passed without her having come to any decision. She could not recover her ease of mind until she had the certainty that she was still beloved. Were her faith in that unshaken she would be perfectly at rest. If loved, she could bear anything. A fit of being charitable had again taken possession of her, so that she was touched by the slightest suffering, and her eyes were filled with tears ready to overflow at any moment. The old man Mascart made her give him tobacco, and the Chouarts drew from her everything they wished, even to preserved fruits. But the Lemballeuses also profited by her gifts, and Tiennette had been seen dancing at the fêtes, dressed in one of 'the good young lady's' gowns. And one day, as she was taking to the grandmother some chemises promised her the previous evening, she saw from a distance, in the midst of the poor family, Madame de Voincourt and her daughter Claire, accompanied by Felicien. The latter, no doubt, had taken them there. She did not show herself, but returned home at once, chilled to the heart. Two days later she saw the



She saw from a distance Claire, accompanied by Felicien.

two again as they came out from the Château ; then one morning the old man Mascart told her of a visit he had received from the handsome young gentleman and two ladies. Then she abandoned her poor people, who seemed no longer to have claims upon her, since Felicien had taken them and given them to his new friends. She gave up her walks for fear she might see them, and thus be so deeply wounded that her sufferings would be increased tenfold. She felt as if something were dying within her, as if, little by little, her very life was passing away.

One evening, after one of these meetings, when alone in her chamber, stifling from anguish, she uttered this cry :

‘ But he loves me no longer.’

She saw before her, mentally, Claire de Voincourt, tall, beautiful, with her crown of black hair, and he was at her side, slight, proud, and handsome. Were they not really created for each other, of the same race, so well mated that one might think they were already married ?

‘ He no longer loves me ! Oh ! he no longer loves me !’

This exclamation broke from her lips as if it were the ruin of all her hopes, and, her faith once shaken, everything gave way without her being able to examine the facts of the case or to regard them calmly. The previous evening she believed in something, but that had now passed by. A breath, coming from she knew not where, had been sufficient, and all at once by a single blow she had fallen into the greatest despair—that of thinking she was not beloved. He had indeed spoken wisely when he told her once that this was the only real

grief, the one insupportable torture. Now her turn had come. Until then she had been resigned, she felt so strong and confident as she awaited the miracle. But her strength passed away with her faith; she was tormented by her distress like a child; her whole being seemed to be only an open wound. And a painful struggle commenced in her soul.

At first she called upon her pride to help her; she was too proud to care for him any more. She tried to deceive herself, she pretended to be free from all care, as she sang while embroidering the Hauteceur coat of arms, upon which she was at work. But her heart was so full it almost stifled her, and she was ashamed to acknowledge to herself that she was weak enough to love him still in spite of all, and even to love him more than ever. For a week these armorial bearings, as they grew thread by thread under her fingers, filled her with a terrible sorrow. Quartered one and four, two and three, of Jerusalem and d'Hauteceur; of Jerusalem, which is argent, a cross potence, or, between four cross-crosslets of the last; and d'Hauteceur, azure, on a castle, or, a shield, sable, charged with a human heart, argent; the whole accompanied by three fleurs-de-lys, or, two at the top and one in the point. The enamels were made of twist, the metals of gold and silver thread. What misery it was to feel that her hands trembled, and to be obliged to lower her head to hide her eyes, that were blinded with tears, from all this brightness. She thought only of him; she adored him in the lustre of his legendary nobility. And when she embroidered the motto of the family, '*Si Dieu veult, je veux*,' in black silk on a streamer of silver, she realised that she was his slave, and that never again could she reclaim him.

Then tears prevented her from seeing, while mechanically she continued to make little stitches in her work.

After this it was indeed pitiable. Angelique loved in despair, fought against this hopeless affection, which she could not destroy. She still wished to go to Felicien, to reconquer him by throwing her arms around his neck ; and thus the contest was daily renewed. Sometimes she thought she had gained control over her feelings, so great a silence appeared to have fallen within and around her. She seemed to see herself as if in a vision, a stranger in reality, very little, very cold, and kneeling like an obedient child in the humility of renunciation. Then it was no longer herself, but a sensible young girl, made so by her education and her home life. Soon a rush of blood mounted to her face, making her dizzy ; her perfect health, the ardent feelings of her youth, seemed to gallop like runaway colts, and she resaw herself, proud and passionate, in all the reality of her unknown origin. Why, then, had she been so obedient ? There was no true duty to consult, only free-will. Already she had planned her flight, and calculated the most favourable hour for forcing open the gate of the Bishop's garden. But already, also, the agony, the grave uneasiness, the torment of a doubt had come back to her. Were she to yield to evil she would suffer eternal remorse in consequence. Hours, most abominable hours, passed in this uncertainty as to what part she should take under this tempestuous wind, which constantly threw her from the revolt of her love to the horror of a fault. And she came out of the contest weakened by each victory over her heart.

One evening, as she was about leaving the house to go to join Felicien, she suddenly thought of her little

book from the Society of Aid to Abandoned Children. She was so distressed to find that she no longer had strength to resist her pride. She took it from the depths of the chest of drawers, turned over its leaves, whispered to herself at each page the lowness of her birth, so eager was she in her need of humility. Father and mother unknown; no name; nothing but a date and a number; a complete neglect, like that of a wild plant that grows by the roadside! Then crowds of memories came to her: the rich pastures of the Mièvre and the cows she had watched there; the flat route of Soulanges, where she had so often walked barefooted; and Maman Nini, who boxed her ears when she stole apples. Certain pages specially attracted her by their painful associations:—those which certified every three months to the visits of the under-inspector and of the physician, whose signatures were sometimes accompanied by observations or information, as, for instance, a severe illness, during which she had almost died; a claim from her nurse on the subject of a pair of shoes that had been burnt; and bad marks that had been given her for her uncontrollable temper. It was, in short, the journal of her misery. But one thing disturbed her above all others—the report in reference to the breaking of the necklace she had worn until she was six years of age. She recollected that she had instinctively hated it, this string of beads of bone, cut in the shape of little olives, strung on a silken cord, and fastened by a medallion of plaited silver, bearing the date of her entrance into the ‘Home’ and her number. She considered it as a badge of slavery, and tried several times to break it with her little hands, without any fear as to the consequences of doing so. Then,

when older, she complained that it choked her. For a year longer she was obliged to wear it. Great, indeed, was her joy when, in the presence of the mayor of the parish, the inspector's aid had cut the cord, replacing this sign of individuality by a formal description, in which allusion was made to her violet-coloured eyes and her fine golden hair. Yet she always seemed to feel around her neck this collar, as if she were an animal that was marked in order that she might be recognised if she went astray; it cut into her flesh and stifled her. When she came to that page on this day, her humility came back to her, she was frightened, and went up to her chamber, sobbing as if unworthy of being loved. At two other times this little book saved her. At last it lost its power, and could not help her in checking her rebellious thoughts.

Now, her greatest temptation came to her at night. Before going to bed, that her sleep might be calm, she imposed upon herself the task of resuming reading the Legends. But, resting her forehead on her hands, notwithstanding all her efforts she could understand nothing. The miracles stupefied her; she saw only a discoloured flight of phantoms. Then in her great bed, after a most intense prostration, she started suddenly from her sleep, in agony, in the midst of the darkness. She sat upright, distracted; then knelt among the half thrown-back clothes, as the perspiration started from her forehead, while she trembled from head to foot. Claspings her hands together, she stammered in prayer, 'Oh! my God! Why have You forsaken me?'

Her great distress was to realise that she was alone in the obscurity at such moments. She had dreamed of Felicien, she was eager to dress herself and go to join

him, before anyone could come to prevent her from fleeing. It was as if the Divine grace were leaving her, as if God ceased to protect her, and even the elements abandoned her. In despair, she called upon the unknown, she listened attentively, hoping for some sign from the invisible. But there was no reply; the air seemed empty. There were no more whispering voices, no more mysterious rustlings. Everything seemed to be dead—the Clos-Marie, with the Chevrotte, the willows, the elm-trees in the Bishop's garden, and the Cathedral itself. Nothing remained of the dreams she had placed there; the white flight of her friends in passing away left behind them only their sepulchre. She was in agony at her powerlessness, disarmed, like a Christian of the Primitive Church overcome by original sin, as soon as the aid of the supernatural had departed. In the dull silence of this protected corner she heard this evil inheritance come back, howling triumphant over everything. If in ten minutes more no help came to her from figurative forces, if things around her did not rouse up and sustain her, she would certainly succumb and go to her ruin. 'My God! my God! why have You abandoned me?' Still kneeling on her bed, slight and delicate, it seemed to her as if she were dying.

Each time, until now, at the moment of her greatest distress she had been sustained by a certain freshness. It was the Eternal Grace which had pity upon her, and restored her illusions. She jumped out on to the floor with her bare feet, and ran eagerly to the window. Then at last she heard the voices rising again; invisible wings brushed against her hair, the people of the 'Golden Legend' came out from the trees and the stones, and

crowded around her. Her purity, her goodness, all that which resembled her in Nature, returned to her and saved her. Now she was no longer afraid, for she knew that she was watched over. Agnes had come back with the wandering, gentle virgins, and in the air she breathed was a sweet calmness, which, notwithstanding her intense sadness, strengthened her in her resolve to die rather than fail in her duty or break her promise. At last, quite exhausted, she crept back into her bed, falling asleep again with the fear of the morrow's trials, constantly tormented by the idea that she must succumb in the end, if her weakness thus increased each day.

In fact, a languor gained fearfully upon Angelique since she thought Felicien no longer loved her. She was deeply wounded and silent, uncomplaining; she seemed to be dying hourly. At first it showed itself by weariness. She would have an attack of want of breath, when she was forced to drop her thread, and for a moment remain with her eyes half closed, seeing nothing, although apparently looking straight before her. Then she left off eating, scarcely taking even a little milk; and she either hid her bread or gave it to the neighbours' chickens, that she need not make her parents anxious. A physician having been called, found no acute disease, but considering her life too solitary, simply recommended a great deal of exercise. It was like a gradual fading away of her whole being; a disappearing by slow degrees, an obliterating of her physique from its immaterial beauty. Her form floated like the swaying of two great wings; a strong light seemed to come from her thin face, where the soul was burning. She could now come down from her chamber only in tottering steps, as she supported herself by

putting her two hands against the wall of the stairway. But as soon as she realised she was being looked at, she made a great effort, and even persisted in wishing to finish the panel of heavy embroidery for the Bishop's seat. Her little, slender hands had no more strength, and when she broke a needle she could not draw it from the work with the pincers.

One morning, when Hubert and Hubertine had been obliged to go out, and had left her alone at her work, the embroiderer, coming back first, had found her on the floor near the frame, where she had fallen from her chair after having fainted away. She had at last succumbed before her task, one of the great golden angels being still unfinished. Hubert took her in his arms, and tried to place her on her feet. But she fell back again, and did not recover consciousness.

'My darling! My darling! Speak to me! Have pity on me!'

At last she opened her eyes and looked at him in despair. Why had he wished her to come back to life! She would so gladly die!

'What is the matter with you, my dear child? Have you really deceived us? Do you still love him?'

She made no answer, but simply looked at him with intense sadness. Then he embraced her gently, took her in his arms, and carried her up to her room. Having placed her upon her bed, when he saw how white and frail she was he wept that he had had so cruel a task to perform as to keep away from her the one whom she so loved.

'But I would have given him to you, my dear! Why did you say nothing to me?'

She did not speak ; her eyelids closed, and she appeared to fall asleep. He remained standing, his looks fixed upon the thin, lily-white countenance, his heart bleeding with pity. Then, as her breathing had become quiet, he went downstairs, as he heard his wife come in.

He explained everything to her in the working-room. Hubertine had just taken off her hat and gloves, and he at once told her of his having found the child on the floor in a dead faint, that she was now sleeping on her bed, overcome with weakness, and almost lifeless.

‘ We have really been greatly mistaken. She thinks constantly of this young man, and it is killing her by inches. Ah ! if you knew what a shock it gave me, and the remorse which has made me almost distracted, since I have realised the truth of the case, and carried her upstairs in so pitiable a state. It is our fault. We have separated them by falsehoods, and I am not only ashamed, but so angry with myself it makes me ill. But what ? Will you let her suffer so, without saying anything to save her ? ’

Still Hubertine was as silent as Angelique, and, pale from anxiety, looked at him calmly and soothingly. But he, always an excitable man, was now so overcome by what he had just seen that, forgetting his usual submission, he was almost beside himself, could not keep still, but threw his hands up and down in his feverish agitation.

‘ Very well, then ! I will speak, and I will tell her that Felicien loves her, and that it is we who have had the cruelty to prevent him from returning, in deceiving him also. Now, every tear she sheds cuts me to the heart. Were she to die, I should consider myself as

having been her murderer. I wish her to be happy. Yes! happy at any cost, no matter how, but by all possible means.'

He had approached his wife, and he dared to cry out in the revolt of his tenderness, being doubly irritated by the sad silence she still maintained.

'Since they love each other, it is they alone who should be masters of the situation. There is surely nothing in the world greater than to love and be beloved. Yes, happiness is always legitimate.'

At length Hubertine, standing motionless, spoke slowly:

'You are willing, then, that he should take her from us, are you not? That he should marry her notwithstanding our opposition, and without the consent of his father? Would you advise them to do so? Do you think that they would be happy afterwards, and that love would suffice them?'

And without changing her manner she continued in the same heart-broken voice:

'On my way home I passed by the cemetery, and an undefinable hope made me enter there again. I knelt once more on the spot that is worn by our knees, and I prayed there for a long time.'

Hubert had turned very pale, and a cold chill replaced the fever of a few moments before. Certainly he knew well the tomb of the unforgiving mother, where they had so often been in tears and in submission, as they accused themselves of their disobedience, and besought the dead to send them her pardon from the depths of the earth. They had remained there for hours, sure that if the grace they demanded were ever granted them they would be cognisant of it at once. That for which

they pleaded, that for which they hoped, was for another infant, a child of pardon, the only sign which would assure them that at last they themselves had been forgiven. But all was in vain. The cold, hard mother, was deaf to all their entreaties, and left them under the inexorable punishment of the death of their firstborn, whom she had taken and carried away, and whom she refused to restore to them.

‘I prayed there for a long time,’ repeated Hubertine. ‘I listened eagerly to know if there would not be some slight movement.’

Hubert questioned her with an anxious look.

‘But there was nothing—no! no sound came up to me from the earth, and within me there was no feeling of relief. Ah! yes, it is useless to hope any longer. It is too late. We brought about our own unhappiness.’

Then, trembling, he asked:

‘Do you accuse me of it?’

‘Yes, you are to blame, and I also did wrong in following you. We disobeyed in the beginning, and all our life has been spoiled in consequence of that one false step.’

‘But are you not happy?’

‘No, I am not happy. A woman who has no child can never be happy. To love merely is not enough. That love must be crowned and blest.’

He had fallen into a chair, faint and overcome, as tears came to his eyes. Never before had she reproached him for the ever-open wound which marred their lives, and she who always after having grieved him by an involuntary allusion to the past had quickly recovered herself and consoled him, this time let him suffer, looking at him as she stood near, but making no sign,

taking no step towards him. He wept bitterly, exclaiming in the midst of his tears :

‘ Ah ! the dear child upstairs—it is she you condemn. You are not willing that Felicien should marry her, as I married you, and that she should suffer as you have done.’

She answered simply by a look : a clear, affectionate glance, in which he read the strength and simplicity of her heart.

‘ But you said yourself, my dear, that our sweet daughter would die from grief if matters were not changed. Do you, then, wish for her death ?’

‘ Yes. Her death now would be preferable to an unhappy life.’

He left his seat, and clasped her in his arms as they both sobbed bitterly. For some minutes they embraced each other. Then he conquered himself, and she in her turn was obliged to lean upon his shoulder, that he might comfort her and renew her courage. They were indeed distressed, but were firm in their decision to keep perfectly silent, and, if it were God’s will that their child must die in consequence, they must accept it submissively, rather than advise her to do wrong.

From that day Angelique was obliged to keep in her room. Her weakness increased so rapidly and to such a degree that she could no longer go down to the work-room. Did she attempt to walk, her head became dizzy at once and her limbs bent under her. At first, by the aid of the furniture, she was able to get to the balcony. Later, she was obliged to content herself with going from her armchair to her bed. Even that distance seemed long to her, and she only tried it in the morning and evening, she was so exhausted.

However, she still worked, giving up the embroidery in bas-relief as being too difficult, and simply making use of coloured silks. She copied flowers after Nature, from a bunch of hydrangeas and hollyhocks, which, having no odour, she could keep in her room. The bouquet was in full bloom in a large vase, and often she would rest for several minutes as she looked at it with pleasure, for even the light silks were too heavy for her fingers. In two days she had made one flower, which was fresh and bright as it shone upon the satin; but this occupation was her life, and she would use her needle until her last breath. Softened by suffering, emaciated by the inner fever that was consuming her, she seemed now to be but a spirit, a pure and beautiful flame that would soon be extinguished.

Why was it necessary to struggle any longer if Felicien did not love her? Now she was dying with this conviction; not only had he no love for her to-day, but perhaps he had never really cared for her. So long as her strength lasted she had contended against her heart, her health, and her youth, all of which urged her to go and join him. But now that she was unable to move, she must resign herself and accept her fate.

One morning, as Hubert placed her in her easy chair, and put a cushion under her little, motionless feet, she said, with a smile:

‘Ah! I am sure of being good now, and not trying to run away.’

Hubert hastened to go downstairs, that she might not see his tears.

CHAPTER XV

It was impossible for Angelique to sleep that night. A nervous wakefulness kept her burning eyelids from closing, and her extreme weakness seemed greater than ever. The Huberts had gone to their room, and at last, when it was near midnight, so great a fear came over her that she would die if she were to remain longer in bed, she preferred to get up, notwithstanding the immense effort required to do so.

She was almost stifled. Putting on a dressing-gown and warm slippers, she crept along slowly as far as the window, which she opened wide. The winter was somewhat rainy, but of a mild dampness; so the air was pleasant to breathe. She sank back into her great arm-chair, after having turned up the wick of a lamp which was on a table near her, and which was always allowed to be kept burning during the entire night. There, by the side of the volume of the 'Golden Legend,' was the bouquet of hydrangeas and hollyhocks which she had begun to copy. That she might once more attach herself to the life which she realised was fast passing from her she had a sudden fancy to work, and drawing her frame forward, she made a few stitches with her trembling fingers. The red silk of the rose-trémière seemed of a deeper hue than ever, in contrast with her white

hands: it was almost as if it were the blood from her veins which was quietly flowing away drop by drop.

But she, who for two hours had turned in vain from side to side in the burning bedclothes, yielded almost immediately to sleep as soon as she was seated. Her head drooped a little toward her right shoulder, being supported by the back of her chair, and the silk remaining in her motionless hands, a looker-on would have thought she was still embroidering. White as snow, perfectly calm, she slept under the light of the lamp in the chamber, still and quiet as a tomb. The faded, rosy draperies of the great royal couch were paler than ever in their shady corner, and the gloom of the walls of the room was only relieved by the great chest of drawers, the wardrobe, and the chairs of old carved oak. Minutes passed; her slumber was deep and dreamless.

At last there was a slight sound, and Felicien suddenly appeared on the balcony, pale, trembling, and, like herself, looking very worn and thin, and his countenance distressed. When he saw her reclining in the easy chair, pitiable and yet so beautiful to look at, he rushed at once into the chamber, and his heart grew heavy with infinite grief as he went forward, and, falling on his knees before her, gazed at her with an expression of utter despair. Could it be that she was so hopelessly ill? Was it unhappiness that had caused her to be so weak, and to have wasted away to such a degree that she appeared to him light as air while she lay there, like a feather which the slightest breath would blow away? In her sleep, her suffering and her patient resignation were clearly seen. He in

fact would have known her only by her lily-like grace, the delicate outlines of her neck, her drooping shoulders, and her oval face, transfigured like that of a youthful virgin mounting towards heaven. Her exquisite hair was now only a mass of light, and her pure soul shone under the soft transparency of her skin. She had all the ethereal beauty of the saints relieved from their bodies. He was both dazzled and distressed; the violent shock rendered him incapable of moving, and, with hands clasped, he remained silent. She did not awake as he continued to watch her.

A little air from the half-closed lips of Felicien must have passed across Angelique's face, as all at once she opened her great eyes. Yet she did not start, but in her turn looked at him with a smile, as if he were a vision. Yes, it was he! She recognised him well, although he was greatly changed. But she did not think she was awake, for she often saw him thus in her dreams, and her trouble was increased when, rousing from her sleep, she realised the truth.

He held his hands out towards her and spoke :

'My dearest, I love you. I was told that you were ill, and came to you immediately. Look at me! Here I am, and I love you.'

She straightened herself up quickly. She shuddered, as with a mechanical movement she passed her fingers over her eyes.

'Doubt no longer, then. See me at your feet, and realise that I love you now, as I have ever done.'

Then she exclaimed :

'Oh! is it you? I had given up expecting you, and yet you are here.'

With her feeble, trembling hands, she had taken his,

thus assuring herself that he was not a fanciful vision of her sleep.

He continued :

‘You have always loved me, and I love you for ever. Yes, notwithstanding everything; and more deeply even than I should have ever thought it possible to do.’

It was an unhopèd-for excess of happiness, and in this first minute of absolute joy they forgot everything else in the world, giving themselves up to the delightful certainty of their mutual affection, and their ability to declare it. The sufferings of the past, the obstacles of the future, had disappeared as if by magic. They did not even think of asking how it was that they had thus come together. But there they were, mingling their tears of joy together as they embraced each other with the purest of feelings : he was overcome with pity that she was so worn by grief and illness that she seemed like a mere shadow in his arms. In the enchantment of her surprise she remained half-paralysed, trembling from exhaustion, radiant with spiritual beauty, as she lay back in her great easy chair, so physically weary that she could not raise herself without falling again, but intoxicated with this supreme contentment.

‘Ah, dear Seigneur, my only remaining wish is gratified. I longed to see you before death came.’

He lifted up his head, as with a despairing movement, and said :

‘Do not speak of dying. It shall not be. I am here, and I love you.’

She smiled angelically.

‘I am not afraid to die now that you have assured me of your affection. The idea no longer terrifies me.

I could easily fall asleep in this way, while leaning on your shoulders. Tell me once more that you love me.'

'I love you as deeply to-day as I loved you yesterday, and as I will love you on the morrow. Do not doubt it for one moment, for it is for eternity! Oh, yes, we will love each other for ever and ever.'

Angelique was enraptured, and with vague eyes looked directly before her, as if seeing something beyond the cold whiteness of the chamber. But evidently she aroused herself, as if just awaking from sleep. In the midst of this great felicity which had appeased her, she had now had time for reflection. The true facts of the case astonished her.

'You have loved me! Yet why did you not at once come to see me?'

'Your parents said that you cared for me no longer. I also nearly died when learning that. At last, I was determined to know the whole truth, and was sent away from the house, the door being absolutely closed against me, and I was forbidden to return.'

'Then they shut the door in your face? Yet my mother told me that you did not love me, and I could but believe her, since, having seen you several times with that young lady, Mademoiselle Claire, I thought naturally you were obeying your father.'

'No. I was waiting. But it was cowardly on my part thus to tremble before him. My great mistake has been to allow the matter to go so far; for my duty was to have trusted only in you, to have insisted upon seeing you personally, and to have acted with you.'

There was a short silence. Angelique sat erect for an instant, as if she had received a blow, and her ex-

pression grew cold and hard, and her forehead was cut by an angry wrinkle.

‘So we have both of us been deceived. Falsehoods have been told in order to separate us from each other. Notwithstanding our mutual love, we have been tortured to such a degree that they have almost killed us both. Very well, then! It is abominable, and it frees us from the promises we made. We are now at liberty to act as we will.’

An intense feeling of contempt so excited her that she stood up on her feet. She no longer realised that she was ill, but appeared to have regained her strength miraculously in the reawakening of all the passion and pride of her nature. To have thought her dream ended, and all at once to have refound it in its full beauty and vitality, delighted her. To be able to say that they had done nothing unworthy their love, but that it was other persons who had been the guilty ones, was a comfort. This growth of herself, this at last certain triumph, exalted her and threw her into a supreme rebellion.

She simply said :

‘Come, let us go.’

And she walked around the room, brave in the return of her energy and her will. She had already selected a mantle to throw over her shoulders. A lace scarf would be sufficient for her head.

Felicien uttered one cry of joy as she thus anticipated his desire. He had merely thought of this flight, but had not had the boldness to dare propose it; and how delightful indeed it would be to go away together, to disappear, and thus put an end to all cares, to overcome all obstacles. The sooner it was done the better,

for then they would avoid having to contend with reflection or afterthought.

‘Yes, darling, let us go immediately. I was coming to take you. I know where we can find a carriage. Before daylight we will be far away: so far that no one will ever be able to overtake us.’

She opened her drawers, but closed them again violently, without taking anything therefrom, as her excitement increased. Could it be possible that she had suffered such torture for so many weeks! She had done everything in her power to drive him from her mind, to try to convince herself that he cared no more for her, until at last she thought she had succeeded in doing so. But it was of no use, and all this abominable work must be done over again. No! she could never have strength sufficient for that. Since they loved each other, the simplest thing in the world to do was to be married, and then no power on earth could separate them.

‘Let me see. What ought I to take? Oh! how foolish I have been with all my childish scruples, when I think that others have lowered themselves so much as even to tell us falsehoods! Yes! even were I to have died, they would not have called you to me. But, tell me, must I take linen and dresses? See, here is a warmer gown. What strange ideas, what unnumbered obstacles, they put in my head. There was good on one side and evil on the other: things which one might do, and again that which one should never do; in short, such a complication of matters, it was enough to make one wild. They were all falsehoods: there was no truth in any of them. The only real happiness is to live to love the one who loves you, and to obey the promptings

of the heart. You are the personification of fortune, of beauty, and of youth, my dear Seigneur; my only pleasure is in you. I give myself to you freely, and you may do with me what you wish.'

She rejoiced in this breaking-out of all the hereditary tendencies of her nature, which she thought had died within her. Sounds of distant music excited her. She saw as it were their royal departure: this son of a prince carrying her away as in a fairy-tale, and making her queen of some imaginary realm; and she was ready to follow him with her arms clasped around his neck, her head upon his breast, with such a trembling from intense feeling that her whole body grew weak from happiness. To be alone together, just they two, to abandon themselves to the galloping of horses, to flee away, and to disappear in each other's arms. What perfect bliss it would be!

'Is it not better for me to take nothing? What good would it do in reality?'

He, partaking of her feverishness, was already at the door, as he replied:

'No, no! Take nothing whatever. Let us go at once.'

'Yes, let us go. That is the best thing to do.'

And she rejoined him. But she turned round, wishing to give a last look at the chamber. The lamp was burning with the same soft light, the bouquet of hydrangeas and hollyhocks was blooming as ever, and in her work-frame the unfinished rose, bright and natural as life, seemed to be waiting for her. But the room itself especially affected her. Never before had it seemed so white and pure to her; the walls, the bed,

the air even, appeared as if filled with a clear, white breath.

Something within her wavered, and she was obliged to lean heavily against the back of a chair that was near her and not far from the door.

‘What is the matter?’ asked Felicien anxiously.

She did not reply, but breathed with great difficulty. Then, seized with a trembling, she could no longer bear her weight on her feet, but was forced to sit down.

‘Do not be anxious; it is nothing. I only want to rest for a minute and then we will go.’

They were silent. She continued to look round the room as if she had forgotten some valuable object there, but could not tell what it was. It was a regret, at first slight, but which rapidly increased and filled her heart by degrees, until it almost stifled her. She could no longer collect her thoughts. Was it this mass of whiteness that kept her back? She had always adored white, even to such a degree as to collect bits of silk and revel over them in secret.

‘One moment, just one moment more, and we will go away, my dear Seigneur.’

But she did not even make an effort to rise. Very anxious, he again knelt before her.

‘Are you suffering, my dear? Cannot I do something to make you feel better? If you are shivering because you are cold, I will take your little feet in my hands, and will so warm them that they will grow strong and be able to run.’

She shook her head as she replied:

‘No, no, I am not cold. I could walk. But please wait a little, just a single minute.’

He saw well that invisible chains seemed again to have taken possession of her limbs, and, little by little, were attaching themselves so strongly to her that very soon, perhaps, it would be quite impossible for him to draw her away. Yet, if he did not take her from there at once, if they did not flee together, he thought of the inevitable contest with his father on the morrow, of the distressing interview before which he had recoiled for weeks past. Then he became pressing, and besought her most ardently.

‘Come, dear, the highways are not light at this hour; the carriage will bear us away in the darkness, and we will go on and on, cradled in each other’s arms, sleeping as if warmly covered with down, not fearing the night’s freshness; and when the day dawns we will continue our route in the sunshine, as we go still farther on, until we reach the country where people are always happy. No one will know us there; we will live by ourselves, lost in some great garden, having no other care than to love each other more deeply than ever at the coming of each new day. We shall find flowers as large as trees, fruits sweeter than honey. And we will live on nothing, for in the midst of this eternal spring, dear soul, we will live on our kisses.’

She trembled under these burning words, with which he heated her face, and her whole being seemed to be fainting away at the representation of these promised joys.

‘Oh! in a few minutes I will be ready; but wait a little longer.’

‘Then, if journeying fatigues us, we will come back here. We will rebuild the Château d’Hauteceur, and we will pass the rest of our lives there. That is my

ideal dream. If it is necessary, we will spend willingly all our fortune therein. Once more shall its donjon overlook from its height the two valleys. We will make our home in the Pavillon d'Honneur, between the Tower of David and the Tower of Charlemagne. The colossal edifice shall be restored as in the days of its primitive power: the galleries, the dwellings, the chapels, shall appear in the same barbaric luxury as before. And I shall wish for us to lead the life of olden times; you a princess and I a prince, surrounded by a large company of armed vassals and of pages. Our walls of fifteen feet of thickness will isolate us, and we shall be as our ancestors were, of whom it is written in the Legend. When the sun goes down behind the hills we will return from hunting, mounted on great white horses, greeted respectfully by the peasants as they kneel before us. The horn will resound in welcome, the drawbridge will be lowered for us. In the evening, kings will dine at our table. At night, our couch will be on a platform surmounted by a canopy like a throne. While we sleep peacefully in purple and gold, soft music will be played in the distance.'

Quivering with pride and pleasure, she smiled now, but soon, overcome by the great suffering that again took possession of her, her lips assumed a mournful expression and the smile disappeared. As with a mechanical movement of her hands she drove away the tempting pictures he called forth, he redoubled his ardour, and wished to make her his by seizing her and carrying her away in his arms.

'Come, dear. Come with me. Let us go, and forget everything but our united happiness.'

Disengaging herself brusquely, she escaped him,

with an instinctive rebellion, and trying to stand up, this cry came at last from her :

‘No, no ! I cannot go. I no longer have the power to do so.’

However, again lamenting her fate, still torn by the contest in her soul, hesitating and stammering, she again turned towards him imploringly.

‘I beg you to be good and not hurry me too much, but wait awhile. I would so gladly obey you, in order to prove to you my love ; I would like above all to go away on your arm to that beautiful far-away country, where we could live royally in the castle of your dreams. It seems to me an easy thing to do, so often have I myself planned our flight. Yet now, what shall I say to you ? It appears to me quite an impossibility ; it is as if a door had suddenly been walled up between us and prevented me from going out.’

He wished to try to fascinate her again, but she quieted him with a movement of her hands.

‘No ; do not say anything more. It is very singular, but in proportion as you utter such sweet, such tender words, which ought to convince me, fear takes possession of me and chills me to the heart. My God ! What is the matter with me ? It is really that which you say which drives me from you. If you continue, I can no longer listen to you ; you will be obliged to go away. Yet wait—wait a little longer !’

She walked very slowly about the room, anxiously seeking to resume her self-control, while he looked at her in despair.

‘I thought to have loved you no longer ; but it was certainly only a feeling of pique, since just now, as soon as I found you again at my feet, my heart beat rapidly,

and my first impulse was to follow you as if I were your slave. Then, if I love you, why am I afraid of you? What is it that prevents me from leaving this room, as if invisible hands were holding me back by my whole body, and even by each hair of my head?’

She had stopped near her bed; then she went as far as the wardrobe, then to the different articles of furniture, one after the other. They all seemed united to her person by invisible ties. Especially the walls of the room, the great whiteness of the mansard roof, enveloped her with a robe of purity, that she could leave behind her only with tears; and henceforth all this would be a part of her being; the spirit of her surroundings had entered into her. And she realised this fact stronger than ever when she found herself opposite her working-frame, which was resting at the side of the table under the lamplight. Her heart softened as she saw the half-made rose, which she would never finish were she to go away in this secret, criminal manner. The years of work were brought back to her mind: those quiet, happy years, during which life had been one long experience of peace and honesty, so that now she rebelled at the thought of committing a fault and of thus fleeing in the arms of her lover. Each day in this little, fresh house of the embroiderers, the active and pure life she had led there, away from all worldly temptations, had, as it were, made over all the blood in her veins.

Then Felicien, realising that in some inexplicable way Angelique was being reconquered and brought to her better self, felt the necessity of hastening their departure. He seized her hands and said :

‘Come, dear. Time passes quickly. If we wait much longer it will be too late.’

She looked at him an instant, and then in a flash realised her true position. Freeing herself from his grasp she exclaimed, resolutely and frankly:

‘It is already too late. You can see for yourself that I am unable now to follow you. Once my nature was so proud and passionate that I could have thrown my two arms around your neck in order that you might carry me away all the more quickly. But now I am no longer the same person. I am so changed that I do not recognise myself. Yes, I realise now that it is this quiet corner where I have been brought up, and the education that has been given me, that has made me what I am at present. Do you then yourself hear nothing? Do you not know that everything in this chamber calls upon me to stay? And I do not rebel in the least against this demand, for my joy at last is to obey.’

Without speaking, without attempting to discuss the question with her, he tried to take her hands again, and to lead her like an intractable child. Again she avoided him and turned slowly toward the window.

‘No, I beseech you to leave me. It is not my hand that you wish for, it is my heart; and also that, of my own free will, I shall at once go away with you. But I tell you plainly that I do not wish to do so. A while ago I thought to have been as eager for flight as you are. But sure of my true self now, I know it was only the last rebellion, the agony of the old nature within me, that has just died. Little by little, without my knowledge, the good traits of my character have been drawn together and strongly united: humility, duty,

and renunciation. So at each return of hereditary tendency to excess, the struggle has been less severe, and I have triumphed over temptation more easily. Now, at last, everything assures me that the supreme contest has just taken place; that henceforth it is finished for ever. I have conquered myself, and my nature is freed from the evil tendencies it had. Ah! dear Seigneur, I love you so much! Do not let us do the slightest thing to mar our happiness. To be happy it is always necessary to submit.'

As he took another step towards her, she was at the threshold of the great window, which was now wide open on to the balcony. She had stopped him with a half-smile as she said:

'You would not like to force me to throw myself down from here. Listen, and understand me when I say to you that everything which surrounds me is on my side. I have already told you that for a long time objects themselves have spoken to me. I hear voices in all directions, and never have they been so distinct as at this moment. Hear! it is the whole Clos-Marie that encourages me not to spoil my life and yours by giving myself to you without the consent of your father. This singing voice is the Chevrotte, so clear and so fresh that it seems to have put within me a purity like crystal since I have lived so near it. This other voice, like that of a crowd, tender and deep, it is that of the entire earth—the grasses, the trees, all the peaceable life of this sacred corner which has so constantly worked for the good of my soul.

'And there are other voices which come from still farther away, from the elms of the garden of Monseigneur, and from this horizon of branches, the smallest of

which interests itself in me, and wishes for me to be victorious.

‘Then, again, this great, sovereign voice, it is that of my old friend, the Cathedral, who, éternally awake, both day and night, has taught me many important things. Each one of the stones in the immense building, the little columns in the windows, the bell-towers of its piers, the flying buttresses of its apse, all have a murmur which I can distinguish, a language which I understand. Listen to what they say : that hope remains even in death. When one is really humble, love alone remains and triumphs. And at last, look ! The air itself is filled with the whisperings of spirits. See, here are my invisible companions, the virgins, who are ever near me and aid me. Listen, listen !’

Smiling, she had lifted up her hand with an air of the deepest attention, and her whole being was in ecstasy from the scattered breathings she heard. They were the virgins of the ‘Golden Legend’ that her imagination called forth, as in her early childhood, and whose mystic flight came from the old book with its quaint pictures, that was placed on the little table. Agnes was first, clothed with her beautiful hair, having on her finger the ring of betrothal to the Priest Paulin. Then all the others came in turn. Barbara with her tower ; Genevieve with her sheep ; Cecilia with her viol ; Agatha with her wounded breast ; Elizabeth begging on the highways, and Catherine triumphing over the learned doctors. She did not forget the miracle that made Lucy so heavy that a thousand men and five yoke of oxen could not carry her away : nor the Governor who became blind as he tried to embrace Anastasia. Then others who seemed flying through the quiet night,

still bearing marks of the wounds inflicted upon them by their cruel martyrdom, and from which rivers of milk were flowing instead of blood. Ah! to die from love like them, to die in the purity of youth at the first kiss of a beloved one!

Felicien had approached her.

‘I am the one person who really lives, Angelique, and you cannot give me up for mere fancies.’

‘Dreams!—fancies!’ she murmured.

‘Yes; for if in reality these visions seem to surround you, it is simply that you yourself have created them all. Come, dear; no longer put a part of your life into objects about you, and they will be quiet.’

She gave way to a burst of enthusiastic feeling.

‘Oh no! Let them speak. Let them call out louder still! They are my strength; they give me the courage to resist you. It is a manifestation of the Eternal Grace, and never has it overpowered me so energetically as now. If it is but a dream, a dream which I have placed in my surroundings, and which comes back to me at will, what of it? It saves me, it carries me away spotless in the midst of dangers. Listen yourself. Yield, and obey like me. I no longer have even a wish to follow you.’

In spite of her weakness, she made a great effort and stood up, resolute and firm.

‘But you have been deceived,’ he said. ‘Even falsehood has been resorted to in order to separate us!’

‘The faults of others will not excuse our own.’

‘Ah! You have withdrawn your heart from me, and you love me no longer.’

‘I love you. I oppose you only on account of our love and for our mutual happiness. Obtain the con-

sent of your father ; then come for me, and I will follow you no matter where.'

'My father ! You do not know him. God only could ever make him yield. Tell me, then, is this really to be the end of everything ? If my father orders me to marry Claire de Voincourt, must I in that case obey him ?'

At this last blow Angelique tottered. Was no torture to be spared her ? She could not restrain this heartbroken cry :

'Oh ! that is too much ! My sufferings are greater than I can bear. I beseech you go away quickly and do not be so cruel. Why did you come at all ? I was resigned. I had learned to accept the misfortune of being no longer loved by you. Yet the moment that I am reassured of your affection, all my martyrdom recommences ; and how can you expect me to live now ?'

Felicien, not aware of the depth of her despair, and thinking that she had yielded simply to a momentary feeling, repeated his question :

'If my father wishes me to marry her——'

She struggled heroically against her intense suffering ; she succeeded in standing up, notwithstanding that her heart was crushed, and dragging herself slowly towards the table, as if to make room for him to pass her, she said :

'Marry her, for it is always necessary to obey.'

In his turn he was now before the window, ready to take his departure, because she had sent him away from her.

'But it will make you die if I do so.'

She had regained her calmness, and, smiling sadly, she replied :

‘Oh! that work is nearly done already.’

For one moment more he looked at her, so pale, so thin, so wan; light as a feather, to be carried away by the faintest breath. Then, with a brusque movement of furious resolution, he disappeared in the night.

When he was no longer there, Angelique, leaning against the back of her armchair, stretched her hands out in agony towards the darkness, and her frail body was shaken by heavy sobs, and cold perspiration came out upon her face and neck.

‘My God!’ This, then, was the end, and she would never see him again. All her weakness and pain had come back to her. Her exhausted limbs no longer supported her. It was with great difficulty that she could regain her bed, upon which she fell helpless, but calm in spirit from the assurance that she had done right.

The next morning they found her there, dying. The lamp had just gone out of itself, at the dawn of day, and everything in the chamber was of a triumphal whiteness.

CHAPTER XVI

ANGELIQUE was dying.

It was ten o'clock one cold morning towards the end of the winter, the air was sharp, and the clear heavens were brightened up by the beautiful sunshine. In her great royal bed, draped with its old, faded, rose-coloured chintz, she lay motionless, having been unconscious during the whole night. Stretched upon her back, her little ivory-like hands carelessly thrown upon the sheet, she no longer even opened her eyes, and her finely-cut profile looked more delicate than ever under the golden halo of her hair; in fact, anyone who had seen her would have thought her already dead, had it not been for the slight breathing movement of her lips.

The day before, Angelique, realising that she was very ill, had confessed, and partaken of the Communion. Towards three o'clock in the afternoon the good Abbé Cornille had brought to her the sacred *Viaticum*. Then in the evening, as the chill of death gradually crept over her, a great desire came to her to receive the Extreme Unction, that celestial remedy, instituted for the cure of both the soul and body. Before losing consciousness, her last words, scarcely murmured, were understood by Hubertine, as in hesitating sentences she

expressed her wish for the holy oils. 'Yes—oh yes!—as quickly—as possible—before it is too late.'

But death advanced. They had waited until day, and the Abbé, having been notified, was about to come.

Everything was now ready to receive the clergyman. The Huberts had just finished arranging the room. Under the gay sunlight, which at this early morning hour struck fully upon the window-panes, it looked pure as the dawn in the nudity of its great white walls. The table had been covered with a fresh damask cloth. At the right and the left of the crucifix two large wax-tapers were burning in the silver candelabrum which had been brought up from the parlour, and there were also there the consecrated wafers, the asperges brush, a ewer of water with its basin and a napkin, and two plates of white porcelain, one of which was filled with long bits of cotton, and the other with little *cornets* of paper. The greenhouses of the lower town had been thoroughly searched, but the only inodorous flowers that had been found were the peonies—great white peonies, enormous tufts of which adorned the table, like a shimmering of white lace. And in the midst of this intense whiteness, Angelique, dying, with closed eyes, still breathed gently with a half-perceptible breath.

The doctor, who had made his first morning visit, had said that she could not live through the day. She might, indeed, pass away at any moment, without even having come to her senses at all. The Huberts, resolute and grave, waited in silent despair. Notwithstanding their grief and tears, it was evidently necessary that this should be the end. If they had ever wished for

this death, preferring to lose their dear child rather than to have her rebellious, it was evident that God also wished it with them, and now, that in this last trying moment they were quite powerless, they could only submit themselves to the inevitable. They regretted nothing, although their sorrow seemed greater than they could bear. Since she, their darling, had been there, suffering from her long illness, they had taken the entire care of her day and night, refusing all aid offered them from outside. They were still there alone in this supreme hour, and they waited.

Hubert, scarcely knowing what he did, walked mechanically to the porcelain stove, the door of which he opened, for the gentle roaring of the flaming wood sounded to him like a plaintive moan; then there was a perfect silence. The peonies seemed even to turn paler in the soft heat of the room.

Hubertine, stronger than her husband, and still fully conscious of all she did, listened to the sounds of the Cathedral as they came to her from behind the walls. During the past moment the old stones had vibrated from the swinging of the bell of the great tower. It must certainly be the Abbé Cornille leaving the church with the sacred oils, she thought; so she went downstairs, that she might receive him at the door of the house.

Two minutes later, the narrow stairway of the little tower was filled with a great murmuring sound. Then in the warm chamber, Hubert, struck with astonishment, suddenly began to tremble, whilst a religious fear, mingled with a faint hope, made him fall upon his knees. Instead of the old clergyman whom they had expected, it was Monseigneur who entered. Yes!

Monseigneur, in lace surplice, having the violet stole, and carrying the silver vessel in which was the oil for the sick, which he himself had blessed on Holy Thursday. His eagle-like eyes were fixed, as he looked straight before him; his beautiful pale face was really majestic under the thick, curly masses of his white hair. Behind him walked the Abbé Cornille, like a simple clerk, carrying in one hand a crucifix, and under the other arm a book of ritual service.

Standing for a moment upon the threshold, the Bishop said in a deep, grave voice :

*' Pax huic domui.'*¹

*' Et omnibus habitantibus in ea,'*² replied the priest in a lower tone.

When they had entered, Hubertine, who had come up the stairs after them, she also trembling from surprise and emotion, went and knelt by the side of her husband. Both of them prostrated themselves most humbly, and prayed fervently from the depths of their souls.

A few hours after his last visit to Angelique, Felicien had had the terrible and dreaded explanation with his father. Early in the morning of that same day he had forced open the doors, he had penetrated even into the Oratory, where the Bishop was still at prayer, after one of those nights of frightful struggling against the memories of the past, which would so constantly reappear before him. In the soul of this hitherto always respectful son, until now kept submissive by fear, rebellion against authority, so long a time stifled, suddenly broke forth, and the collision of these two

¹ 'Peace be to this house.'

² 'And to all the inhabitants thereof.'

men of the same blood, with natures equally prompt to violence, was intense. The old man had left his devotional chair, and with cheeks growing purple by degrees, he listened silently as he stood there in his proud obstinacy. The young man, with face equally inflamed, poured out everything that was in his heart, speaking in a voice that little by little grew louder and rebuking. He said that Angelique was not only ill, but dying. He told him that in a pressing moment of temptation, overcome by his deep affection, he had wished to take her away with him that they might flee together, and that she, with the submissive humility of a saint, and chaste as a lily, had refused to accompany him. Would it not be a most abominable murder to allow this obedient young girl to die, because she had been unwilling to accept him unless when offered to her by the hand of his father? She loved him so sincerely that she could die for him. In fact, she could have had him, with his name and his fortune, but she had said 'No,' and, triumphant over her feelings, she had struggled with herself in order to do her duty. Now, after such a proof of her goodness, could he permit her to suffer so much grief? Like her, he would be willing to give up everything, to die even, if it might be, and he realised that he was cowardly. He despised himself for not being at her side, that they might pass out of life together, by the same breath. Was it possible that anyone could be so cruel as to wish to torment them, that they should both have so sad a death, when one word, one simple word, would secure them such bliss? Ah! the pride of name, the glory of wealth, persistence in one's determination: all these were nothing in comparison to the fact that by the

union of two hearts the eternal happiness of two human beings was assured. He joined his hands together, he twisted them feverishly, quite beside himself as he demanded his father's consent, still supplicating, already almost threatening. But the Bishop, with face deeply flushed by the mounting of his blood, with swollen lips, with flaming eyes, terrible in his unexpressed anger, at last opened his mouth, only to reply by this word of parental authority: 'Never!'

Then Felicien, absolutely raving in his rebellion, lost all control over himself.

He spoke of his mother, he really threatened his father by the remembrance of the dead. It was she who had come back again in the shape of her son to vindicate and reclaim the right of affection. Could it be that his father had never loved her? Had he even rejoiced in her death, since he showed himself so harsh towards those who loved each other, and who wished to live? But he might well do all he could to become cold in the renunciations demanded by the Church; she would come back to haunt and to torture him, because he was willing to torture the child they had had, the living witness of their affection for each other. She would always be there, so long as their son lived. She wished to reappear in the children of their child for ever. And he was causing her to die over again, by refusing to her son the betrothed of his choice, the one through whom the race was to be continued. When a man had once been married to a woman, he should never think of wedding the Church. Face to face with his father, who, motionless, appeared in his fearful silence to grow taller and taller, he uttered unfilial, almost murderous words. Then, shocked at himself, he rushed away,

shuddering at the extent to which passion had carried him.

When once more alone, Monseigneur, as if stabbed in the full breast by a sharp weapon, turned back upon himself and struggled deeply with his soul, as he knelt upon his prie-Dieu. A half-rattling sound came from his throat. Oh! these frightful heart contests, these invincible weaknesses of the flesh. This woman, and his beloved dead, who was constantly coming back to life, he adored her now, as he did the first evening when he kissed her white feet; and this son, he idolised him as belonging to her, as a part of her life, which she had left to him. And even the young girl, the little working girl whom he had repulsed, he loved her also with a tenderness like that of his son for her. Now his nights were inexpressibly agitated by all three. Without his having been willing to acknowledge it, had she then touched him so deeply as he saw her in the great Cathedral, this little embroiderer, with her golden hair, her fresh pure neck, in all the perfume of her youth? He saw her again; she passed before him, so delicate, so pure in her victorious submission. No remorse could have come to him with a step more certain or more conquering. He might reject her with a loud voice. He knew well that henceforth she held him strongly by the heart with her humble hands that bore the signs of work. Whilst Felicien was so violently beseeching him, he seemed to see them both behind the blonde head of the petitioner—these two idolised women, the one for whom his son prayed, and the one who had died for her child. They were there in all their physical beauty, in all their loving devotion, and he could not tell where he had found strength to resist, so entirely did his

whole being go out towards them. Overcome, sobbing, not knowing how he could again become calm, he demanded from Heaven the courage to tear out his heart, since this heart belonged no longer to God alone.

Until evening Monseigneur continued at prayer. When he at last reappeared he was white as wax, distressed, anxious, but still resolute. He could do nothing more, but he repeated to his son the terrible word—‘Never!’ It was God alone who had the right to relieve him from his promise; and God, although implored, gave him no sign of change. It was necessary to suffer.

Some days had passed. Felicien constantly wandered round the little house, wild with grief, eager for news. Each time that he saw anyone come out he almost fainted from fear. Thus it happened that on the morning when Hubertine ran to the church to ask for the sacred oils, he learned that Angelique could not live through the day. The Abbé Cornille was not at the Sacristy, and he rushed about the town to find him, still having a last hope that through the intervention of the good man some Divine aid might come. Then, as he brought back with him the sought-for clergyman, his hope left him, and he had a frightful attack of doubt and anger. What should he do? In what way could he force Heaven to come to his assistance? He went away, hastened to the Bishop’s palace, the doors of which he again forced open, and before his incoherent words his father was for a moment frightened. At last he understood. Angelique was dying! She awaited the Extreme Unction, and now God alone could save her. The young man had only come to cry out all his agony,

to break all relations with this cruel, unnatural father, and to accuse him to his face of willingly allowing this death. But Monseigneur listened to him without anger : upright and very serious, his eyes suddenly brightened with a strange clearness, as if an inner voice had spoken to him. Motioning to his son to lead the way, he followed him, simply saying at last :

‘ If God wishes it, I also wish it.’

Felicien trembled so that he could scarcely move. His father consented, freed from his personal vow, to submit himself to the goodwill of the hoped-for miracle. Henceforth they, as individuals, counted for nothing. God must act for himself. Tears blinded him. Whilst in the Sacristy Monseigneur took the sacred oils from the hands of the Abbé Cornille. He accompanied them, almost staggering ; he did not dare to enter into the chamber, but fell upon his knees at the threshold of the door, which was open wide.

The voice of the Bishop was firm, as he said :

‘ *Pax huic domui.*’

‘ *Et omnibus habitantibus in ea,*’ the priest replied.

Monseigneur had just placed on the white table, between the two wax-candles, the sacred oils, making in the air the sign of the cross, with the silver vase. Then he took from the hands of the Abbé the crucifix, and approached the sufferer that he might make her kiss it. But Angelique was still unconscious : her eyes were closed, her mouth shut, her hands rigid, and looking like the little stiff figures of stone placed upon tombs. He examined her for a moment, and, seeing by the slight movement of her chest that she was not dead, he placed upon her lips the crucifix. He waited. His face preserved the majesty of a minister of penitence,

and no signs of emotion were visible when he realised that not even a quivering had passed over the exquisite profile of the young girl, nor in her beautiful hair. She still lived, however, and that was sufficient for the redemption of her sins.

The Abbé then gave to Monseigneur the vessel of holy water and the asperges brush, and while he held open before him the ritual book, he threw the holy water upon the dying girl, as he read the Latin words, *Asperges me, Domine, hyssopo et mundabor : lavabis me, et super nivem dealbabor.*¹

The drops sprang forth in every direction, and the whole bed was refreshed by them as if sprinkled with dew. It rained upon her hands and upon her cheeks; but one by one the drops rolled away as if from insensible marble. At last the Bishop turned towards the assistants and sprinkled them in their turn. Hubert and Hubertine, kneeling side by side, in the full union of their perfect faith, bent humbly under the shower of this benediction. Then Monseigneur blessed also the chamber, the furniture, the white walls in all their bare purity, and as he passed near the door he found himself before his son, who had fallen down on the threshold, and was sobbing violently, having covered his face with his burning hands. With a slow movement, he raised three times the asperges brush, and he purified him with a gentle rain. This holy water, spread everywhere, was intended at first to drive away all evil spirits, who were flying by crowds, although invisible. Just at this moment a pale ray of the winter sun passed over the

¹ 'Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be clean : thou shalt wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.'

bed, and a multitude of atoms, light specks of dust, seemed to be living therein. They were innumerable as they came down from an angle of the window, as if to bathe with their warmth the cold hands of the dying.

Going again towards the table, Monseigneur repeated the prayer, '*Exaudi nos.*'¹

He made no haste. It was true that death was there, hovering near the old, faded chintz curtains, but he knew that it was patient, and that it would wait. And although in her state of utter prostration the child could not hear him, he addressed her as he asked her :

'Is there nothing upon your conscience which distresses you? Confess all your doubts and fears, my daughter; relieve your mind.'

She was still in the same position, and she was always silent. When, in vain, he had given time for a reply, he commenced the exhortation with the same full voice, without appearing to notice that none of his words reached her ear.

'Collect your thoughts, meditate, demand from the depths of your soul pardon from God. The Sacrament will purify you, and will strengthen you anew. Your eyes will become clear, your ears chaste, your nostrils fresh, your mouth pure, your hands innocent.'

With eyes fixed upon her, he continued reading to the end all that was necessary for him to say; while she scarcely breathed, nor did one of her closed eyelids move. Then he said :

'Recite the Creed.'

After having waited awhile, he repeated it himself :

¹ 'Give ear to us.'

*'Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem.'*¹

'Amen' replied the Abbé Cornille.

All this time the heavy sobbing of Felicien was heard, as upon the landing-place he wept in the enervation of hope. Hubert and Hubertine still prayed fervently, with the same anxious waiting and desire, as if they had felt descend upon them all the invisible powers of the Unknown. A change now came in the service, from the murmur of half-spoken prayers. Then the litanies of the ritual were unfolded, the invocation to all the Saints, the flight of the Kyrie Eleison, calling Heaven to the aid of miserable humanity, mounting each time with great outbursts, like the fume of incense.

Then the voices suddenly fell, and there was a deep silence. Monseigneur washed his fingers in the few drops of water that the Abbé poured out from the ewer. At length he took the vessel of sacred oil, opened the cover thereof, and placed himself before the bed. It was the solemn approach of the Sacrament of this last religious ceremony, by the efficacy of which are effaced all mortal or venial sins not pardoned, which rest in the soul after having received the other sacraments, old remains of forgotten sins, sins committed unwittingly, sins of languor which prevented one from being firmly re-established in the grace of God. The pure white chamber seemed to be like the individuals collected therein, motionless, and in a state of surprise and expectation. Where could all these sins be found? They must certainly come from outside in this great band of sun's rays, filled with dancing specks of dust, which appeared to bring germs of life even to this great royal

¹ 'I believe in one God, the Father Almighty.'

couch, so white and cold from the coming of death to a pure young maiden.

Monseigneur meditated a moment, fixing his looks again upon Angelique, assuring himself that the slight breath had not ceased, struggling against all human emotion, as he saw how thin she was, with the beauty of an archangel, already immaterial. His voice retained the authority of a divine disinterestedness, and his thumb did not tremble when he dipped it into the sacred oils as he commenced the unctions on the five parts of the body where dwell the senses: the five windows by which evil enters into the soul.

First upon the eyes, upon the closed eyelids, the right and then the left; and slowly, lightly, he traced with his thumb the sign of the Cross.

*'Per istam sanctam unctionem, et suam piissimam misericordiam, indulgeat tibi Dominus quidquid per visum deliquisti.'*¹

And the sins of the sight were redeemed; lascivious looks, immodest curiosity, the pride of spectacles, unwholesome readings, tears shed for guilty troubles.

And she, dear child, knew no other book than the 'Golden Legend,' no other horizon than the apse of the Cathedral, which hid from view all the rest of the world. She had wept only in the struggle of obedience and the renunciation of passion.

The Abbé Cornille wiped both her eyes with a bit of cotton, which he afterwards put into one of the little cornets of paper.

¹ 'By this holy anointing and His gracious mercy, the Lord forgive whatever sins thou hast committed through *seeing*.' [This formula is repeated with reference to the other senses—hearing, smell, taste and touch.]

Then Monseigneur anointed the ears, with their lobes as delicate and transparent as pearl, first the right ear, afterwards the left, scarcely moistened with the sign of the cross.

‘Per istam sanctam unctionem, et suam piissimam misericordiam, indulgeat tibi Dominus quidquid per auditum deliquisti.’¹

So all the abominations of hearing were atoned for: all the words and music which corrupt, the slanders, the calumnies, the blasphemies, the sinful propositions listened to with complacency, the falsehoods of love which aided the forgetfulness of duty, the profane songs which excited the senses, the violins of the orchestra which, as it were, wept voluptuously under the brilliant lights.

She in her isolated life, like that of a cloistered nun—she had never even heard the free gossip of the neighbours, or the oath of the carman as he whips his horses. The only music that had ever entered her ears was that of the sacred hymns, the rumblings of the organs, the confused murmurings of prayers, with which at times vibrated all this fresh little house, so close to the side of the great church.

The Abbé, after having dried the ears with cotton, put that bit also into one of the white cornets.

Monseigneur now passed to the nostrils, the right and then the left, like two petals of a white rose, which he purified by touching them with the sacred oil and making on them the sign of the cross.

‘Per istam sanctam unctionem, et suam piissimam misericordiam, indulgeat tibi Dominus quidquid per odoratum deliquisti.’¹

And the sense of smell returned to its primitive innocence, cleansed from all stain: not only from the carnal disgrace of perfumes, from the seduction of flowers with breath too sweet, from the scattered fragrances of the air which put the soul to sleep; but yet again from the faults of the interior sense, the bad examples given to others, and the contagious pestilence of scandal. Erect and pure, she had at last become a lily among the lilies, a great lily whose perfume fortified the weak and delighted the strong. In fact, she was so truly delicate that she could never endure the powerful odour of carnations, the musk of lilacs, the feverish sweetness of hyacinths, and was only at ease with the scentless blossoms, like the marguerites and the periwinkles.

Once more the Abbé, with the cotton, dried the anointed parts, and slipped the little tuft into another of the cornets.

Then Monseigneur, descending to the closed mouth, through which the faint breath was now scarcely perceptible, made upon the lower lip the sign of the cross.

*‘Per istam sanctam unctionem, et suam piissimam misericordiam, indulgeat tibi Dominus quidquid per gustum deliquisti.’*¹

This time it was the pardon for the base gratifications of taste, greediness, too great a desire for wine, or for sweets; but especially the forgiveness for sins of the tongue, that universally guilty member, the provoker, the poisoner, the inventor of quarrels, the inciter to wars, which makes one utter words of error and falsehood which at length obscure even the heavens. Yet

her whole mouth was only a chalice of innocence. She had never had the vice of gluttony, for she had taught herself, like Elizabeth, to eat whatever was set before her, without paying great attention to her food. And if it were true that she lived in error, it was the fault of her dream which had placed her there, the hope of a beyond, the consolation of what was invisible, and all the world of enchantment which her ignorance had created and which had made of her a saint.

The Abbé having dried the lips, folded the bit of cotton in the fourth white corner.

At last Monseigneur anointed first the right and then the left palms of the two little ivory-like hands, lying open upon the sheet, and cleansed them from their sins with the sign of the cross.

‘Per istam sanctam unctionem, et suam piissimam misericordiam, indulgeat tibi Dominus quidquid per tactum deliquisti.’

And the whole body was purified, being washed from its last spots—those of the touch the most repugnant of all. Pilfering, fighting, murder, without counting other sins of the breast, the body, and the feet, which were also redeemed by this unction. All which burns in the flesh, our anger, our desires, our unruly passions, the snares and pitfalls into which we run, and all forbidden joys by which we are tempted. Since she had been there, dying from her victory over herself, she had conquered her few failings, her pride and her passion, as if she had inherited original sin simply for the glory of triumphing over it. She knew not, even, that she had had other wishes, that love had drawn her towards disobedience, so armed was she with the breast-

plate of ignorance of evil, so pure and white was her soul.

The Abbé wiped the little motionless hands, and putting the last puff of cotton in the remaining cornet, he threw the five papers into the fire at the back of the stove.

The ceremony was finished. Monseigneur washed his fingers before saying the final prayer. He had now only to again exhort the dying, in placing in her hand the symbolic taper, to drive away the demons, and to show that she had just recovered her baptismal innocence. But she remained rigid, her eyes closed, her mouth shut as if dead. The holy oils had purified her body, the signs of the cross had left their traces on the five windows of the soul, without making the slightest wave of colour, or of life, mount to her cheeks.

Although implored and hoped for, the prodigy did not appear, and the room was silent and anxious. Hubert and Hubertine, still kneeling side by side, no longer prayed, but, with their eyes fixed upon their darling, gazed so earnestly that they both seemed motionless for ever, like the figures of the *donataires* who await the Resurrection in a corner of an old painted glass window. Felicien had drawn himself up on his knees and was now at the door, having ceased from sobbing, as with head erect he also might see if God would always remain deaf to their prayers. Was it then a mere lure? would not this holy Sacrament bring her back to life?

For the last time Monseigneur approached the bed, followed by the Abbé Cornille, who held, already lighted, the wax-taper which was to be placed in the hand of the young girl. And the Bishop, not willing to

acknowledge the state of unconsciousness in which she remained, determining to go even to the end of the rite, that God might have time in which to work, pronounced the formula :—

*‘ Accipe lampadem ardentem, custodi unctionem tuam, ut cum Dominus ad judicandum venerit, possis occurrere ei cum omnibus sanctis et vivas in saecula saeculorum. ’*¹

‘ Amen ’ replied the Abbé.

But when they endeavoured to open Angelique’s hand and to press it round the taper, the hand, powerless, as if already dead, escaped them and fell back upon her breast.

Then, little by little, Monseigneur yielded to a great nervous trembling. It was the emotion which, for a long time restrained, now broke out within him, carrying away with it the last rigidity of priesthood. He dearly loved her, this child, from the day when she had come to sob at his feet, so innocent, and showing so plainly the pure freshness of her youth. Since then, in his nights of distress, he had contended chiefly against her, to defend himself from the overwhelming tenderness with which she inspired him. At this moment she was worthy of pity, with this pallor of death, with an ethereal beauty which showed, however, so deep a suffering that he could not look at her without his heart being secretly overwhelmed with distress.

He could no longer control himself. His eyelids were swollen by the great tears which at last rolled down his cheeks. She must not die in this way : he

¹ ‘ Receive this light, and keep the unction thou hast received, that when the Lord shall come to judgment thou mayest meet Him with all His saints, and live with Him for ever and ever.’

was conquered by her touching charms even in death, and all his paternal feelings went out towards her.

Then Monseigneur, recalling to mind the numerous miracles of his race, the power which had been given them by Heaven to heal, thought that doubtless God awaited his consent as a father. He invoked Saint Agnes, before whom all his ancestors had offered up their devotions, and as Jean V. d'Hauteœur prayed at the bedside of those smitten by the plague and kissed them, so now he prayed and kissed Angelique upon her lips.

‘ If God wishes, I also wish it.’

Immediately Angelique opened her eyelids. She looked at the Bishop without surprise as she awoke from her long trance, and, her lips still warm from the kiss, smiled upon him. These things were not strange to her, for they certainly must have been realised sooner or later, and it might be that she was coming out of one dream only to have another still; but it seemed to her perfectly natural that Monseigneur should have come to betroth her to Felicien, since the hour for that ceremony had arrived. In a few minutes, unaided, she sat up in the middle of her great royal bed.

The Bishop, radiant, showing by his expression his clear appreciation of the remarkable prodigy, repeated the formula:—

‘ Accipe lampadem ardentem, custodi unctionem tuam, ut cum Dominus ad judicandum venerit, possis occurrere ei cum omnibus sanctis et vivas in saecula saeculorum.’

‘ Amen ’ replied the Abbé.

Angelique had taken the lighted taper, and held it up with a firm hand. Life had come back to her, like the flame of the candle, which was burning clear and bright, driving away the spirits of the night.

A great cry resounded through the room. Felicien was standing up, as if raised by the power of the miracle, while the Huberts, overwhelmed by the same feeling, remained upon their knees, with wonder-stricken eyes, with delighted countenances, before that which they had seen. The bed had appeared to them enveloped with a brilliant light; white masses seemed still to be mounting up on the rays of the sunlight, and the great walls, the whole room in fact, kept a white lustre, as that of snow.

In the midst of all, Angelique, like a refreshed lily, replaced upon its branch, appeared in the clear light. Her fine golden hair was like a halo of glory around her head, her violet-coloured eyes shone divinely, and her pure face beamed with a living splendour.

Felicien, seeing that she was saved, touched by the Divine grace that Heaven had vouchsafed them, approached her, and knelt by the side of the bed.

‘Ah! dear soul, you recognise us now, and you will live. I am yours. My father wishes it to be so, since God has desired it.’

She bowed her head, smiling sweetly as she said, ‘Oh! I knew it must be so, and waited for it. All that I have foreseen will come to pass.’

Monseigneur, who had regained his usual proud serenity, placed the crucifix once more on her lips, and this time she kissed it as a submissive servant. Then, with a full movement of his hands, through the room, above the heads of all present, the Bishop gave the final

benediction, while the Huberts and the Abbé Cornille wept.

Felicien had taken one of the little hands of Angelique, while in the other little hand the taper of innocence burned bright and clear.

CHAPTER XVII

THE marriage was fixed for the early part of March. But Angelique remained very feeble, notwithstanding the joy which radiated from her whole person. She had wished after the first week of her convalescence to go down to the work-room, persisting in her determination to finish the panel of embroidery in bas-relief which was to be used for the Bishop's chair.

'It would be,' she said cheerfully, 'her last, best piece of work; and besides, no one ever leaves,' she added, 'an order only half-completed.'

Then, exhausted by the effort, she was again forced to keep her chamber. She lived there, happy and smiling, without regaining the full health of former times, always white and immaterial as the sacred sacramental oils; going and coming with a gentle step like that of a vision, and after having occasionally made the exertion of walking as far as from her table to the window, finding herself obliged to rest quietly for hours and give herself up to her sweet thoughts. At length they deferred the wedding-day, thinking it better to wait for her complete recovery, which must certainly come if she were well nursed and cared for.

Every afternoon Felicien went up to see her. Hubert and Hubertine were there, and they passed together



Angelique remained very feeble.

most delightful hours, during which they continually made and re-made the same bright projects. Seated in her great chair she laughed gaily, seemed trembling with life and vivacity, as she was the first to talk of the days which would be so well filled when together they could take long journeys; and of all the unknown joys that would come to them after they had restored the old Château d'Hauteceur. Anyone, to have seen her then, would have considered her saved and regaining her strength in the backward spring, the air of which, growing warmer and warmer daily, entered by the open window. In fact, she never fell back into the deep gravities of her dreams, except when she was entirely alone and was not afraid of being seen. In the night, voices still appeared to be near her: then it seemed as if the earth were calling to her; and at last the truth was clearly revealed to her, so that she fully understood that the miracle was being continued only for the realisation of her dream. Was she not already dead, having simply the appearance of living, thanks to the respite which had been granted her from Divine Grace? This idea soothed her with deep gentleness in her hours of solitude, and she did not feel a moment's regret at the thought of being called away from life in the midst of her happiness, so certain was she of always realising to its fullest extent her anticipated joy. The cheerfulness she had hitherto shown became simply a little more serious; she abandoned herself to it quietly, forgetting her physical weakness as she indulged in the pure delights of fancy. It was only when she heard the Huberts open the door, or when Felicien came to see her, that she was able to sit upright, to bring her thoughts back to her surroundings, and to appear as if

she were regaining her health, laughing pleasantly while she talked of their years of happy housekeeping far away, in the days to come.

Towards the end of March Angelique grew very restless and much weaker. Twice, when by herself, she had long fainting fits. One morning she fell at the foot of her bed, just as Hubert was bringing her up a cup of milk; by a great effort of will she conquered herself, and, that she might deceive him, she remained on the floor and smiled, as she pretended to be looking for a needle that had been dropped. The following day she was gayer than usual, and proposed hastening the marriage, suggesting that at all events it should not be put off any later than the middle of April. All the others exclaimed at this idea, asking if it would not be advisable to wait awhile, since she was still so delicate. There was no need of being in such a hurry. She, however, seemed feverishly nervous, and insisted that the ceremony should take place immediately—yes, as soon as possible. Hubertine, surprised at the request, having a suspicion as to the true motive of this eagerness, looked at her earnestly for a moment, and turned very pale as she realised how slight was the cold breath which still attached her daughter to life. The dear invalid had already grown calm, in her tender need of consoling others and keeping them under an illusion, although she knew personally that her case was hopeless. Hubert and Felicien, in continual adoration before their idol, had neither seen nor felt anything unusual. Then Angelique, exerting herself almost supernaturally, rose up, and was more charming than ever, as she slowly moved back and forth with the light step of former days. She continued to speak of her

wish, saying if it were granted she would be so happy, and that after the wedding she would certainly be cured. Moreover, the question should be left to Monseigneur; he alone should decide it. That same evening, when the Bishop was there, she explained her desire to him, fixing her eyes on his, regarding him steadily and beseechingly, and speaking in her sweet, earnest voice, under which there was hidden an ardent supplication, unexpressed in words. Monseigneur realised it, and understood the truth, and he appointed a day in the middle of April for the ceremony.

Then they lived in great commotion from the necessary bustle attendant upon the preparations for the marriage. Notwithstanding his official position as guardian, Hubert was obliged to ask permission, or rather the consent of the Director of Public Assistance, who always represented the family council, Angelique not yet being of age; and Monsieur Grandsire, the Justice of the Peace, was charged with all legal details, in order to avoid as much as possible the painful side of the position to the young girl and to Felicien. But the dear child, realising that something was being kept back, asked one day to have her little book brought up to her, wishing to put it herself into the hands of her betrothed. She was now, and would henceforth remain, in a state of such sincere humility that she wished him to know thoroughly from what a low position he had drawn her, to elevate her to the glory of his well-honoured name and his great fortune. These were her parchments, her titles to nobility; her position was explained by this official document, this entry on the calendar where there was only a date followed by a number. She turned over all the leaves once more,

then gave it to him without being confused, happy in thinking that in herself she was nothing, but that she owed everything to him. So deeply touched was he by this act, that he knelt down, kissed her hands while tears came to his eyes, as if it were she who had made him the one gift, the royal gift of her heart.

For two weeks the preparations occupied all Beaumont, both the upper and the lower town being in a state of great excitement therefrom. It was said that twenty working-girls were engaged day and night upon the trousseau. The wedding-dress alone required three persons to make it, and there was to be a *corbeille*, or present from the bridegroom, to the value of a million of francs: a fluttering of laces, of velvets, of silks and satins, a flood of precious stones—diamonds worthy a Queen. But that which excited the people more than all else was the great amount given in charity, the bride having wished to distribute to the poor as much as she had received herself. So another million was showered down upon the country in a rain of gold. At length she was able to gratify all her old longings of benevolence, all the prodigalities of her most exaggerated dreams, as with open hands she let fall upon the wretched and needy a stream of riches, an overflow of comforts. In her little white, bare chamber, confined to her old armchair, she laughed with delight when the Abbé Cornille brought to her the list of the distributions he had made. ‘Give more! Give more!’ she cried, as it seemed to her as if not enough were done. She would, in reality, have liked to have seen the Père Mascart seated for ever at a table before a princely banquet; the Chouteaux living in palatial luxury; the *mère* Gabet cured of her rheumatism, and by the aid

of money to have renewed her youth. As for the Lemballeuse, the mother and daughters, she absolutely wished to load them with silk dresses and jewellery. The hail of golden pieces redoubled over the town as in fairy-tales, far beyond the daily necessities, as if merely for the beauty and joy of seeing the triumphal golden glory, thrown from full hands, falling into the street and glittering in the great sunlight of charity.

At last, on the eve of the happy day, everything was in readiness. Felicien had bought a large house on the Rue Magloire, at the back of the Bishop's palace, which had been fitted up and furnished most luxuriously. There were great rooms hung with admirable tapestries, filled with the most beautiful articles imaginable; a salon in old, rare pieces of hand embroidery; a boudoir in blue, soft as the early morning sky; and a sleeping-room, which was particularly attractive: a perfect little corner of white silk and lace—nothing, in short, but white, airy, and light—an exquisite shimmering of purity. But Angelique had constantly refused to go to see all these wonderful things, although a carriage was always ready to convey her there. She listened to the recital of that which had been done with an enchanted smile, but she gave no orders, and did not appear to wish to occupy herself with any of the arrangements. 'No, no,' she said, for all these things seemed so far away in the unknown of that vast world of which she was as yet totally ignorant. Since those who loved her had prepared for her so tenderly this happiness, she desired to partake thereof, and to enter therein like a princess coming from some chimerical country, who approaches the real kingdom where she is to reign for ever. In the same way she preferred to know nothing,

except by hearsay, of the *corbeille*, which also was waiting for her—a superb gift from her betrothed, the wedding outfit of fine linen, embroidered with her cipher as marchioness, the full-dress costumes tastefully trimmed, the old family jewels valuable as the richest treasures of a cathedral, and the modern jewels in their marvellous yet delicate mountings, precious stones of every kind, and diamonds of the purest water. It was sufficient to her that her dream had come to pass, and that this great good future awaited her in her new home, radiant in the reality of the new life that was opening before her. The only thing she saw was her wedding-dress, which was brought to her on the marriage morning.

That day, when she awoke, Angelique, still alone, had in her great bed a moment of intense exhaustion, and feared that she would not be able to get up at all. She attempted to do so, but her knees bent under her; and in contrast to the brave serenity she had shown for weeks past, a fearful anguish, the last, perhaps, took utter possession of her. Then, as in a few minutes Hubertine came into the room, looking unusually happy, she was surprised to find that she could really walk, for she certainly did not do so from her own strength, but aid came to her from the invisible, and friendly hands sustained and carried her. They dressed her; she no longer seemed to weigh anything, but was so slight and frail that her mother was astonished, and laughingly begged her not to move any more if she did not wish to fly quite away. During all the time of preparing her toilette, the little fresh house of the Huberts, so close to the side of the Cathedral, trembled under the great breath of the Giant, of that which already was

humming therein of the preparations for the ceremony, the nervous activity of the clergy, and especially the ringing of the bells, a continuous peal of joy, with which the old stones were vibrating.

In the upper town, for over an hour there had been a glorious chiming of bells, as on the greatest holy days. The sun had risen in all its beauty, and on this limpid April morning a flood of spring rays seemed living with the sonorous peals which had called together all the inhabitants of the place. The whole of Beaumont was in a state of rejoicing on account of the marriage of this little embroiderer, to whom their hearts were so deeply attached, and they were touched by the fact of her royal good fortune. This bright sunlight, which penetrated all the streets, was like the golden rain, the gifts of fairy-tales, rolling out from her delicate hands. Under this joyful light, the multitude crowded in masses towards the Cathedral, filling the side-aisles of the church, and coming out on to the Place du Cloître. There the great front of the building rose up, like a huge bouquet of stone, in full blossom, of the most ornamental Gothic, above the severe Romanesque of the foundation. In the tower the bells still rung, and the whole façade seemed to be like a glorification of these nuptials, expressive of the flight of this poor girl through all the wonders of the miracle, as it darted up and flamed, with its open lace-work ornamentations, the lily-like efflorescence of its little columns, its balustrades, and its arches, the niches of saints surmounted with canopies, the gable ends hollowed out in trefoil points, adorned with crossettes and flowers, immense rose-windows opening out in the mystic radiation of their mullions.

At ten o'clock the organs pealed. Angelique and Felicien were there, walking with slow step towards the high altar, between the closely-pressed ranks of the crowd. A breath of sincere, touching admiration came from every side. He, deeply moved, passed along proud and serious, with his blonde beauty of a young god appearing slighter than ever from his closely-fitting black dress-coat. But she, above all, struck the hearts of the spectators, so exquisite was she, so divinely beautiful with a mystic, spiritual charm. Her dress was of white watered silk, simply covered with rare old Mechlin lace, which was held by pearls, a whole setting of them designing the ruches of the waist and the ruffles of the skirt. A veil of old English point was fastened to her head by a triple crown of pearls, and falling to her feet, quite covered her. That was all—not a flower, not a jewel, nothing but this slight vision, this delicate, trembling cloud, which seemed to have placed her sweet little face between two white wings, like that of the Virgin of the painted glass window, with her violet eyes and her golden hair.

Two armchairs, covered with crimson velvet, had been placed for Felicien and Angelique before the altar; and directly behind them, while the organs increased their phrases of welcome, Hubert and Hubertine knelt on the low benches which were destined for the family. The day before an intense joy had come to them, from the effects of which they had not yet recovered, and they were incapable of expressing their deep, heartfelt thanks for their own happiness, which was so closely connected with that of their daughter. Hubertine, having gone once more to the cemetery, saddened by the thought of their loneliness, and the little house,

which would seem so empty after the departure of the dearly-beloved child, had prayed to her mother for a long time; when suddenly she felt within her an inexplicable relief and gladness, which convinced her that at last her petition had been granted. From the depths of the earth, after more than twenty years, the obstinate mother had forgiven them, and sent them the child of pardon so ardently desired and longed for. Was this the recompense of their charity towards the poor forlorn little creature whom they had found one snowy day at the Cathedral entrance, and who to-day was to wed a prince with all the show and pomp of the greatest ceremony? They remained on their knees, without praying in formulated words, enraptured with gratitude, their whole souls overflowing with an excess of infinite thanksgiving. And on the other side of the nave, seated on his high, official throne, Monseigneur was also one of the family group. He seemed filled with the majesty of the God whom he represented; he was resplendent in the glory of his sacred vestments, and the expression of his countenance was that of a proud serenity, as if he were entirely freed from all worldly passions. Above his head, on the panel of wonderful embroidery, were two angels supporting the brilliant coat of arms of Hauteceur.

Then the solemn service began. All the clergy connected with the Cathedral were present to do honour to their Bishop, and priests had come from the different parishes to assist them. Among the crowd of white surplices which seemed to overflow the grating, shone the golden capes of the choristers, and the red robes of the singing-boys. The almost eternal night of the side-aisles, crushed down by the weight of the

heavy Romanesque chapels, was this morning slightly brightened by the limpid April sunlight, which struck the painted glass of the windows so that they seemed to be a burning of gems, a sacred bursting into blossom of luminous flowers. But the background of the nave particularly blazed with a swarming of wax-tapers, tapers as innumerable as the stars of evening in a summer sky. In the centre, the high altar seemed on fire from them, a true 'burning bush,' symbolic of the flame that consumes souls; and there were also candles in large candelabra and in chandeliers, while before the plighted couple, two enormous lustres with round branches looked like two suns. About them was a garden of masses of green plants and of living blossoms, where were in flower great tufts of white azaleas, of white camellias, and of lilacs. Away to the back of the apse sparkled bits of gold and silver, half-seen skirts of velvet and of silk, a distant dazzling of the tabernacle among the sombre surroundings of green verdure. Above all this burning the nave sprang out, and the four enormous pillars of the transept mounted upward to support the arched vaulting, in the trembling movement of these myriads of little flames, which almost seemed to pale at times in the full daylight which entered by the high Gothic windows.

Angelique had wished to be married by the good Abbé Cornille, and when she saw him come forward in his surplice, with the white stole, followed by two clerks, she smiled. This was at last the triumphant realisation of her dream—she was wedding fortune, beauty, and power far beyond her wildest hopes. The church itself was singing by its organs, radiant with its wax-tapers, and alive with the crowd of believers and priests, whom

she knew to be around her on every side. Never had the old building been more brilliant or filled with a more regal pomp, enlarged as it were in its holy, sacred luxury, by an expansion of happiness. Angelique smiled again in the full knowledge that death was at her heart, celebrating its victory over her, in the midst of this glorious joy. In entering the Cathedral she had glanced at the Chapel d'Hauteceur, where slept Laurette and Balbine, the 'Happy Dead,' who passed away when very young, in the full happiness of their love. At this last hour she was indeed perfect. Victorious over herself, reclaimed, renewed, having no longer any feeling of passion or of pride at her triumph, resigned at the knowledge that her life was fast leaving her, in this beautiful Hosanna of her great friend, the blessed old church. When she fell upon her knees, it was as a most humble, most submissive servant, entirely free from the stain of original sin ; and in her renunciation she was thoroughly content.

The Abbé Cornille, having mounted to the altar, had just come down again. In a loud voice he made the exhortation ; he cited as an example the marriage which Jesus had contracted with the Church ; he spoke of the future, of days to come when they would live and govern themselves in the true faith ; of children whom they must bring up as Christians ; and then, once more, in face of this hope, Angelique again smiled sweetly, while Felicien trembled at the idea of all this happiness, which he believed to be assured. Then came the consecrated demands of the ritual, the replies which united them together for their entire existence, the decisive 'Yes'—which she pronounced in a voice filled with emotion from the depths of her heart, and which he

said in a much louder tone, and with a tender earnestness. The irrevocable step was taken, the clergyman had placed their right hands together, one clasping the other, as he repeated the prescribed formula: '*Ego coniungo vos in matrimonium, in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti.*'¹ But there were still the rings to be blessed, the symbols of inviolable fidelity, and of the eternity of the union, which is lasting. In the silver basin, above the rings of gold, the priest shook back and forth the asperges brush, and making the sign of the Cross over each one, said, '*Benedic, Domine, annulum hunc.*'²

Then he presented them to the young couple, to testify to them that the Church sanctified their union; that for the husband henceforth his heart was sealed, and no other woman could ever enter therein; and the husband was to place the ring upon his wife's finger in order to show her, in his turn, that henceforth he alone among all men existed for her. This was the strict union, without end, the sign of her dependence upon him, which would recall to her constantly the vows she had made; it was also the promise of a long series of years, to be passed together, as if by this little circle of gold they were attached to each other even to the grave.

And while the priest, after the final prayers, exhorted them once more, Angelique wore always the sweet expression of renunciation; she, the pure soul, who knew the truth.

Then, as the Abbé Cornille withdrew, accompanied

¹ 'I unite you in matrimony, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'

² 'Bless, O Lord, this ring.'

by his clerks, the organs again burst forth with peals of joy. Monseigneur, motionless until now, bent towards the young couple with an expression of great mildness in his eagle-like eyes. Still on their knees, the Huberts lifted their heads, blinded by their tears of joy. And the enormous depths of the organs' peals rolled and lost themselves by degrees in a hail of little sharp notes, which were swept away under the high arches, like the morning song of the lark. There was a long waving movement, a half-hushed sound amongst the reverential crowd, who filled to overflowing even the side-aisles and the nave. The church, decorated with flowers, glittering with the taper lights, seemed beaming with joy from the Sacrament.

Then there were nearly two hours more of solemn pomp; the Mass being sung and the incense being burnt.

The officiating clergyman had appeared, dressed in his white chasuble, accompanied by the director of the ceremonies, two censer-bearers carrying the censer and the vase of incense, and two acolytes bearing the great golden candlesticks, in which were lighted tapers.

The presence of Monseigneur complicated the rites, the salutations, and the kisses. Every moment there were bowings, or bendings of the knee, which kept the wings of the surplices in constant motion. In the old stalls, with their backs of carved wood, the whole chapter of canons rose; and then again, at other times it was as if a breath from heaven prostrated at once the clergy, by whom the whole apse was filled. The officiating priest chanted at the altar. When he had finished, he went to one side, and took his seat while the choir in its

turn for a long time continued the solemn phrases of the services in the fine, clear notes of the young choristers, light and delicate as the flutes of archangels. Among these voices was a very beautiful one, unusually pure and crystalline, that of a young girl, and most delicious to hear. It was said to be that of Mademoiselle Claire de Voincourt, who had wished and obtained permission to sing at this marriage, which had been so wonderfully secured by a miracle. The organ which accompanied her appeared to sigh in a softened manner, with the peaceful calm of a soul at ease and perfectly happy.

There were occasionally short spells of silence. Then the music burst out again with formidable rollings, while the master of the ceremonies summoned the acolytes with their chandeliers, and conducted the censer-bearers to the officiating clergyman, who blessed the incense in the vases. Now there was constantly heard the movements of the censer, with the silvery sound of the little chains as they swung back and forth in the clear light. There was in the air a bluish, sweet-scented cloud, as they incensed the Bishop, the clergy, the altar, the Gospel, each person and each thing in its turn, even the close crowd of people, making the three movements, to the right, to the left, and in front, to mark the Cross.

In the meantime Angelique and Felicien, on their knees, listened devoutly to the Mass, which is significant of the mysterious consummation of the marriage of Jesus and the Church. There had been given into the hands of each a lighted candle, symbol of the purity preserved since their baptism. After the Lord's Prayer

they had remained under the veil, which is a sign of submission, of bashfulness, and of modesty; and during this time the priest, standing at the right-hand side of the altar, read the prescribed prayers. They still held the lighted tapers, which serve also as a sign of remembrance of death, even in the joy of a happy marriage. And now it was finished, the offering was made, the officiating clergyman went away, accompanied by the director of the ceremonies, the incense-bearers, and the acolytes, after having prayed God to bless the newly-wedded couple, in order that they might live to see and multiply their children, even to the third and fourth generation.

At this moment the entire Cathedral seemed living and exulting with joy. The March Triumphant was being played upon the organs with such thunder-like peals that they made the old edifice fairly tremble. The entire crowd of people now rose, quite excited, and straining themselves to see everything; women even mounted on the chairs, and there were closely-pressed rows of heads as far back as the dark chapels of the outer side-aisles. In this vast multitude every face was smiling, every heart beat with sympathetic joy. In this final adieu the thousands of tapers appeared to burn still higher, stretching out their flames like tongues of fire, vacillating under the vaulted arches. A last Hosanna from the clergy rose up through the flowers and the verdure in the midst of the luxury of the ornaments and the sacred vessels. But suddenly the great portal under the organs was opened wide, and the sombre walls of the church were marked as if by great sheets of daylight. It was the clear April morning,

the living sun of the spring-tide, the Place du Cloître, which was now seen with its tidy-looking, white houses; and there another crowd, still more numerous, awaited the coming of the bride and bridegroom, with a more impatient eagerness, which already showed itself by gestures and acclamations. The candles had grown paler, and the noises of the street were drowned in the music of the organs.

With a slow step, between the double hedge of the worshippers, Angelique and Felicien turned towards the entrance-door. After the triumphant carrying out of her dream, she was now about to enter into the reality of life. This porch of broad sunlight opened into the world of which as yet she was entirely ignorant. She retarded her steps as she looked earnestly at the rows of houses, at the tumultuous crowd, at all which greeted and 'claimed her. Her weakness was so intense that her husband was obliged to almost carry her. However, she was still able to look pleased, as she thought of the princely house, filled with jewels and with queenly toilettes, where the nuptial chamber awaited her, all decorated with white silk and lace. Almost suffocated, she was obliged to stop when halfway down the aisle; then she had sufficient strength to take a few steps more. She glanced at her wedding-ring, so recently placed upon her finger, and smiled at this sign of eternal union. Then, on the threshold of the great door, at the top of the steps which went down into the Place du Cloître, she tottered. Had she not really arrived at the summit of her happiness? Was not it there that the joy of her life, being perfected, was to end? With a last effort she raised herself as much as possible, that she might put her lips upon the lips of

Felicien. And in that kiss of love she passed away for ever.

But her death was without sadness. Monseigneur, with his habitual movement of pastoral benediction, aided this pure soul to free itself from the frail body. He had regained his calmness, and had once more found in the fulfilment of his sacred calling the desired-for peace.

The Huberts, unconscious of what had taken place, were still kneeling, grateful for the pardon at last granted them, and feeling as if re-entering into existence. For them, as well as for their beloved daughter, the dream was to be accomplished. All the Cathedral and the whole town were *en fête*. The organs sounded louder than ever; the bells pealed joyously; the multitude waited to greet the loving couple on the threshold of the mystic church under the glorious spring sunlight.

It was indeed a beautiful death. Angelique, happy and pure, carried away suddenly at the moment of the realisation of her fondest dream, taken into the heavenly life from the dark Romanesque chapels with the flamboyant, Gothic-vaulted ceiling, from among the gilded decorations and paintings of ancient times, in the full Paradise of Golden Legends. What more could she have asked for?

Felicien held in his arms simply a soft and tender form, from which life had departed; this bridal robe of lace and pearls seemed like the light wings of a bird, still warm to the touch. For a long time he had well known that he could claim but a shadow. The exquisite vision that came from the Invisible had returned to the Invisible.

It was merely a semblance, which effaced itself; the vanishing of an illusion.

Everything is only a dream.

And so, at the moment of supreme earthly happiness, Angelique had disappeared in the slight breath of a loving kiss.



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